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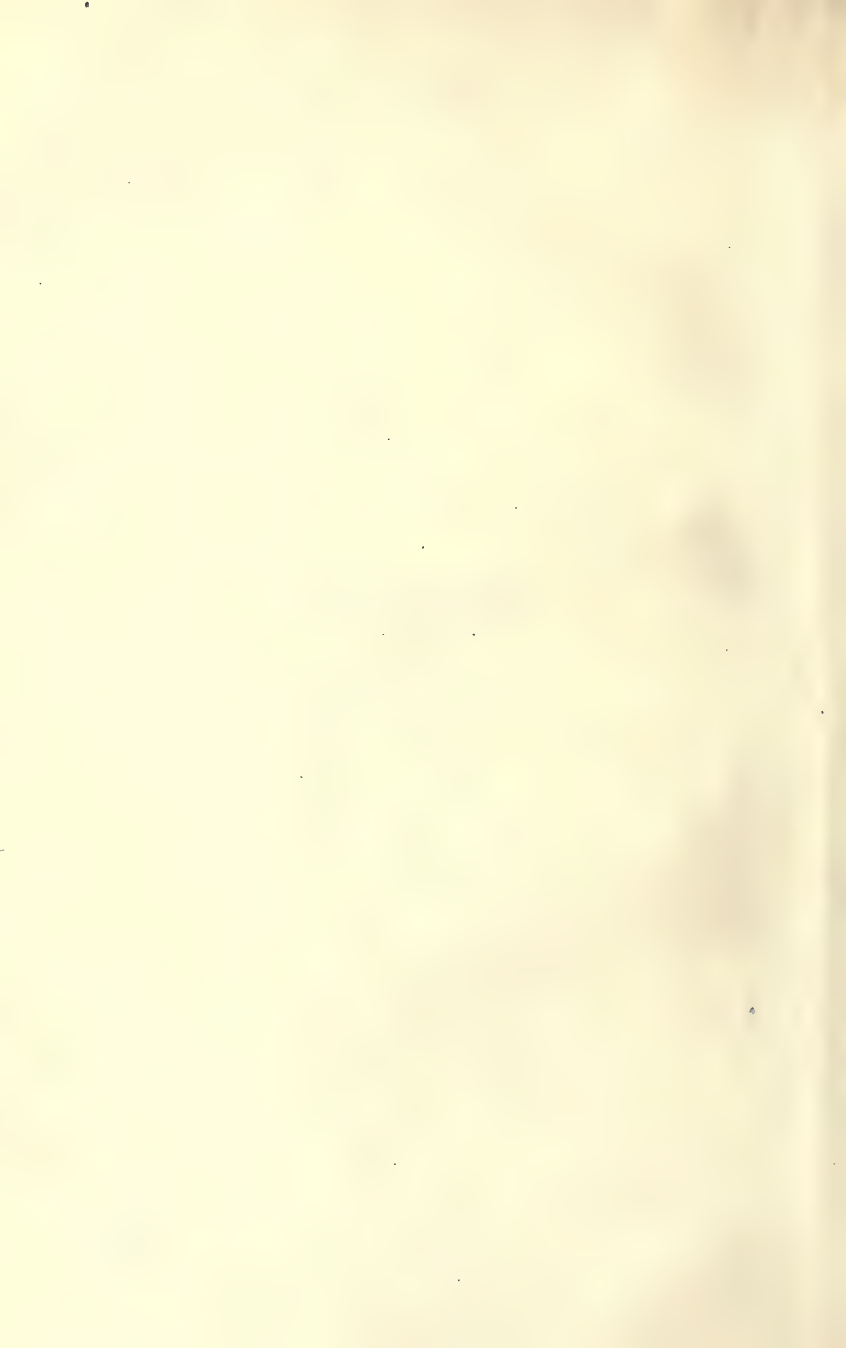








EMERSON  
AND  
GOETHE



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# EMERSON AND GOETHE

BY

FREDERICK B. WAHR

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
University of Michigan

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TO  
PROFESSOR MAX WINKLER  
SCHOLAR, TEACHER, AND  
FRIEND



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## PREFACE.

To the student of Emerson there lies no little interest in the study of his relation to those men and minds whose works deeply impressed him and from whom his own thought derived considerable comfort and substantiation. These men were in a sense spiritual companions to him throughout his life, and in our study of his regard for their genius we gain clearer understanding.

### ERRATA:

- p. 15, l. 8—read (1781) instead of (1871).
- p. 19, l. 30—read repetition instead of repition.
- p. 21, l. 11—read 1814 instead of 1819.
- p. 110, l. 25-26—read antinomy instead of antimony.
- p. 165, l. 13—read only instead of ony.
- p. 170, l. 4—read same instead of tame.
- p. 176, l. 29—read (10181) instead of (1081).
- p. 177, l. 9—read an instead of and.
- p. 186, note 30—read which appeared instead of and appeared.

Professor Thomas, first called attention to the subject as worthy of larger study and themselves pointed out briefly the salient facts, students must acknowledge a debt of gratitude. But now the appearance of additional material has thrown the whole matter into a larger perspective and is sufficient warrant for a new study.

For sources one turns to the statements of the Essays and Correspondence, to which have been recently added the Journals. These latter furnish in a sense a most illuminating commentary upon the published product, for





## PREFACE.

To the student of Emerson there lies no little interest in the study of his relation to those men and minds whose works deeply impressed him and from whom his own thought derived considerable comfort and substantiation. These men were in a sense spiritual companions to him throughout his life, and in our study of his regard for their genius we gain clearer understanding, not so much of this or that particular man, but far more of Emerson himself. Indeed, Emerson as a critic is oftentimes the best critic of Emerson. Thus in his divers comment on Goethe we find at once sympathetic insight and admiration interspersed with unhappy misunderstanding, censure, and condemnation, and though we do not always meet the real Goethe, we are always confronted with the real Emerson.

It is the aim, then, of this dissertation to treat of Emerson's critical opinion of Goethe. This has been done before, but with no exhaustive intent, by Calvin Thomas in the *Goethe Jahr Buch* (Vol. 24), and by S. H. Goodnight in the *German-American Annals* (May 1903). In so far as these gentlemen, particularly Professor Thomas, first called attention to the subject as worthy of larger study and themselves pointed out briefly the salient facts, students must acknowledge a debt of gratitude. But now the appearance of additional material has thrown the whole matter into a larger perspective and is sufficient warrant for a new study.

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in them Emerson's thought found expression in its growing moments, before it was deftly molded and weighed for public utterance. In this respect they throw new and larger light upon his reading and critical opinion of Goethe. Moreover, other investigations have enabled us to consider Emerson's statements in their historical relations; and our aim shall be, then, not to isolate the facts, but to treat them in their relation to the critical temper of that movement of which Emerson was spokesman, New England Transcendentalism, and thus to touch upon those forces which conditioned his judgment. Time and place must be considered, as must the general relation of the larger to the smaller thought-environment. To this end the relation of the New England Transcendental Movement to the larger Romantic Renaissance in Europe will be sketched, and the resultant reading and criticism of Goethe in the new world.

Again, Emerson's statements on Goethe have had such large and marked influence upon the general attitude of the American public toward the German poet that much of the misconception and prejudice which has characterized this criticism on the whole may be laid directly at his door. For in Emerson and in most of his contemporaries we shall note a constant feeling of indecision and uncertainty in their estimate of Goethe. We shall find on the one hand unbounded admiration and emulation of the German poet's profound wisdom and ability, whereas on the other hand we shall find them bitterly attacking him as a man and artist. None or few of them were able to sense the deeper unity of his life and work; they were attracted to the sage, but repelled by the artist, and on the whole they failed to understand the synthesis between art and life and its importance in the Goethean philosophy. Thus we shall meet with a misrepresentation of Goethe which still exercises a large influence in America. If the present study may help to-

ward clearing up much of this prevalent misunderstanding and prejudice, and aid in bringing about a better appreciation of Emerson's attitude—and thereby of Goethe—its purpose will have been in part attained.

The aim of this dissertation, we may repeat, is to determine as accurately as possible Emerson's critical attitude toward Goethe, to explain both from the point-of-view of individual character and from that of historical environment how and why he arrived at his conclusions, to evaluate them historically and critically, and thus seek to understand, in so far as we can, the justification and limitation of his critical opinion of the greatest of German poets.





## CHAPTER I.

### PHASES OF THE ROMANTIC REVOLT.

#### I. NEW ENGLAND TRANSCENDENTALISM.

The Transcendental Movement in New England was at the same time a religious, a philosophical, and a literary Renaissance. Fundamentally religious, it marks at once the culmination of and revolt against the orthodox Unitarian doctrine of the time, a supplanting of intellect by intuition and of the church by the soul as the criterion of religious truth. Philosophically it lifts itself from the sensualism of Locke and the English empiricists to the idealism of Kant and the German Romanticists, holding firmly to the conviction, as Alcott put it, "that there is more in the mind than enters it through the senses." In the field of literature it is given finest expression in the prose and poetry of Emerson and his circle. A turning-inward of the mind upon itself to discover the source and essence of all life, a search for the permanent in the constantly changing flux of things, and a rediscovery of the time-old truths of being, now cast into the mould of Puritan New England, brought forth little that was new but all that was vital, and in this lies the significance of the Movement in the history of thought. Ten years of enthusiastic activity, roughly speaking from 1833 to 1845, in and about Boston, point off its period of greatest productivity, though its influence is still felt even in the every-day walks of American life, and its origins go back beyond the beginning of the century on both sides of the water.

Many forces were at work in New England which helped prepare the way for the acceptance of the Transcendental doctrine and contributed to its development, and the general situation has much in common with the whole nature of life and thought before the outbreak of the Romantic Revolt in Europe. Indeed, one might characterize the American situation as a miniature reproduction of the European movement under the influence of other conditions and in another environment. The eighteenth century in Europe was a period of transition, and as such one of criticism, materialism, and scepticism in life and thought. Every man seemed a reflection of a little world playing in a divine scheme of pre-established harmony. Life was aristocratic, artificial, formalistic, cosmopolitan, rationalistic. Sensation was looked upon as the primary and reflection as the secondary source of all knowledge. "The last resort a man has recourse to in the conduct of himself," said Locke, "is the understanding." The sphere of the mind was limited to the bounds of human experience, which were the barriers of sense. Whatever transcended or broke beyond was mockery; there was neither room for flight nor space for fall. Man kept close to the earth and to the things of his immediate sense-perception. Religion in the main fell into the abstract petrifications of theology; art became largely formalistic and didactic, a mere matter of dogma and rule; and poetry, degraded and ornamental, became in Emerson's words "fit to put around frosted cake." (Wks. V, p. 255). The method of thought was self-analysis and the inevitable consequence scepticism. There was a tranquillity and evenness of temper, a pallor, a seeming indifference, almost monotony to this world. It lacked the lightning-torch of inspiration, and it wasted itself in its own criticism. The sensualism of Locke had led the thinking world to the brink of an abyss, where Hume, mercilessly pointing into the depths, startled it

to the quick. Was all man's knowledge, his faith and hope, merely an aggregate of disconnected sense-impressions? The rationalist found himself a hopeless prisoner fettered in the limited vision of his own thought, and the voice of nature and that of the emotions were loudly claiming to be heard. Kant was aroused to his giant labors, and the first Critique, that of the Pure Reason (1871), was the result, ushering in a new era and heralding the rebirth of the Spirit.

Doubtless it was chiefly the scepticism and consequent positivism of Hume that awoke Kant to action, as it was the naturalism of Rousseau that prepared the way for the return to nature and the social upheaval of the French Revolution. The latter half of the eighteenth century marked the rediscovery of passion. The age of rationalism with its pale emotional accompaniment, sentimentalism, exhausted itself, and in its place was hurled the torch of emotional enthusiasm, individual power, and spiritual emancipation. The German emotional outburst, the Storm and Stress of the sixties and seventies, supported by the new critical views of a Hamann and a Herder, preceded the publication of Kant's Critique by practically a decade. In Rousseau it found the apostle of a new view of nature, in Shakespeare a new form of dramatic art, in Herder a new and historical method of criticism, and towering up heavenwards in the hazy background loomed the splendid spires of medieval Gothicism, at once a revelation of past glory and an inspiration to new endeavor. But the Storm and Stress was, after all, a literary rather than a philosophical movement and prophetic of what was to come. The Spirit ready for flight awaited assurance of ethereal heights; philosophy had as yet broken through no pathway for it. The movement remained essentially realistic. Its poets gloried in the emotions, in the mystery which the Enlightenment had repudiated, but they did not seek to penetrate this mys-

tery in order to understand it. They were satisfied to sense and to feel it and did not believe that knowledge could add a new glory. "Gefühl ist alles." The Enlightenment had analyzed; the Storm and Stress preferred merely to experience and to live to the full. A new synthesis was to be the work of the Romanticists. Hamann and Herder, anticipating as they did the aesthetic idealism of Schelling, remained with Hume and the empiricists deriders of the very Reason, which Kant was to lay as the corner-stone of the Romantic philosophy. Locke, looking inwardly and outwardly, had found an insurmountable bulwark in sense; Kant, looking inwardly to the Transcendental-ego and outwardly to the thing-in-itself, found both equally unknowable, and therefore turning to the human will he discovered a basis for the moral world and the Divinity in the practical life. Locke had called his epoch-making work an "Essay on Human Understanding," and Kant termed his Critique that of "Pure Reason;" and herein lay a distinction of great import. Kant re-established the Reason as the basis of knowledge and upon this the philosophy of Romanticism builded. This distinction, too, was the one made by Coleridge and aroused the world of English thought. Going forth from Kant, Fichte with the intense subjectivity of his nature developed his ethical idealism, and Schelling with the sense of the artist constructed his system of aesthetic idealism. For Kant the absolute was in its essence unknowable; for Fichte nature was a product of our self-consciousness, the basis of which is moral; for Schelling and the Romanticists it was Spirit in the process of evolution, attaining the highest-known form of expression in human self-consciousness, and regarding the outward and the inward as different stages of one and the same creative power, which, vital in all things, was known as God or Weltseele. This unknown but all-pervading mysterious something it was, that the



Romanticists sought to determine in their criticism and philosophy and to express in their own literary effort. Their critics studied its workings in the history and literature of past ages and distant lands and found it ever expressive, conditioned by circumstance and colored by temperament. Their poets intuited its mystery, investigated its strange secrets, and hailed it as the essence of all life.

The Romantic Revolt then, was, briefly, the culmination of a century of rationalism and the consequent reaction—a reassertion of the rights of the Spirit and the emotions along with those of the mind. It was not merely an outburst of emotional enthusiasm, a glorification of youthful power and vigor, but rather a thoughtful consideration of life as viewed through the vista of the Spirit. Idealism supplanted materialism, scepticism yielded to optimism, the artificial gave way to the natural, and the former vague cosmopolitanism became enriched and individualized by a growing sense of nationalism. The emotions were rediscovered, the Spirit freed, the imagination emancipated, and the result was a great and far-reaching outburst of poetry, especially of a lyric note.

Now the American phase of this revolt lagged half a century behind the outburst in Europe, though it gave echo to the same spirit of unrest and passion. Its progress was in the main independent, for when it began its struggles those in Europe had come to an end, though the influence from abroad came to give it fresh impetus and encouragement and to help direct its course. In each case we have an inevitable reaction, distinguished by enthusiastic activity, a reaction which is the outcome of a period of lethargy and decline; yet, however alike the two movements may appear in general aim, fundamentally they were distinct. The struggle in New England was essentially religious as was the temper of New

England culture: the European movement was in essence philosophical and literary, though not without its social interests. The leaders of New England thought were almost entirely "enlightened" members of the clergy. They emphasized the ethical values, inquiring as to the how of life, whereas the German leaders were pre-eminently metaphysical, inquiring into the what of life.

We have found that the eighteenth century by exhausting the rational side of human nature rediscovered the emotional. Such too was the case in New England. The Calvinistic theology of the fathers, subjected here and there to the critical cunning of stray bits of English rationalism and free thought, offered many a weak spot to the sceptical mind. Heresies crept into the Calvinistic stronghold; Arminianism questioned the doctrine of Election; Arianism attacked the doctrine of the Trinity; and all the efforts of Jonathan Edwards, invincible as he seemed, resulted only in a closer consolidation of the liberal element, for Jonathan Edwards, though prophetic in his idealistic and mystic bent of mind, was on the whole reactionary in theological argument. Though the new views, termed Unitarian, could be ostracised, they could not be suppressed, for the time was ripe for their growth.

Unitarianism it was, which coincided with the general temper of European thought in the eighteenth century, and it was the very nature of Unitarianism—as it had been the nature of the Enlightenment—to prepare the way for the Transcendental Revolt and make its development a certainty. The Movement began about 1785 in this country, and was indeed typical of the critical century in which it appeared. In origin a reaction against Calvinism, it itself soon became conservative and formal, striving to give permanence to what was in its very essence but a passing phase. Philosophically its masters were Locke and the English empiricists; Paley's "Natural

Theology," "Evidences of Christianity," and "Moral Philosophy" were text-books in Harvard College, and were accepted as authorities in the fields of morals and theology. A radical step was taken when Hume's Essay on the Understanding was introduced. The typical Unitarian was a man of culture and tolerance, intellectual, moral, a good citizen, a conservative in politics, and a staunch defender of his faith. What he lacked was the spark of divine fire, enthusiasm, emotional depth—in Channing's words, "life and feeling." He had but little interest in metaphysics; he was satisfied with the surface, with sense, and was repulsed by the mystery beyond. Tied to a world of matters-of-fact, his spirit sought in vain for flight in the complex structure of theological dogma. James Freeman Clarke has ably characterized the temper of the times for us<sup>1</sup>; "In theology a certain literalism prevailed, and the doctrines of Christianity were inferred from counting and weighing texts on either side. Not the higher reason, with its intuition of eternal ideas, but the analytic understanding, with its logical methods, was considered to be the ruler in the realm of thought. There was more of culture than of original thought, more of trained excellence of character than of moral enthusiasm. Religion was believed to consist in holding rational or orthodox opinions, going regularly to church, and listening every Sunday to a certain number of prayers, hymns, and sermons. . . . . There was an unwritten creed of morals, literature, and social thought, to which all were expected to conform. There was little originality and much repetition. On all subjects there were certain formulas which it was considered proper to repeat. . . . . In those days, if I remember them aright, it was regarded a kind of duty to think as every one else thought, a sort of delinquency or weakness to differ from the majority."

The reaction came with the gradual influx of the new thought from Europe, especially of German idealism:

through English channels. Yet, as abroad so here it was to a certain extent a natural process, life in all its intensity reasserting itself, emotion claiming its due place by the side of reason, and spirit demanding its right of sense. William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) stands out, we may say, as the Herder of the new awakening. He contained in himself the best of the old and the best of the new manner of thought, yet in all strictness he can be claimed by neither, though one would fain class him as a Transcendentalist. He was a man of cultured and conservative tastes, but withal a man of life and feeling, of emotional depth, and of speculative interest. "Our Bishop" the Transcendentalists called him, thereby gratefully acknowledging his active sympathy and interest in their efforts.

Channing's famous sermon on "Unitarian Christianity," preached at the ordination of Jared Sparks at Baltimore in 1819, marks one of the critical moments in religious controversy in this country and sounds the first trumpet-call of the Transcendental Revolt. A comparison with Emerson's Divinity Address, delivered just nineteen years later, shows how Transcendentalism had grown out and away from Unitarianism, how it had ceased to be a theological way of looking at things and had become more purely spiritual. The Divinity Address marks a later stage in the Revolt, or better, the Revolt at the height of power and activity. In the nineteen intervening years much had taken place in New England, and many new influences had left their impress upon the mould of thought. These had been nineteen years of activity and growth, and they form a distinct contrast to the lethargic temper of the preceding Unitarian spirit. Chief among these influences were the circulation of Wordsworth's poetry, the works of Coleridge, the essays of Carlyle, and the eager interest in German idealistic speculation and



Romantic thought—above all the reading and study of Goethe.

Just when the "new views" first made their way across the water is hard to determine, though one can feel quite sure that their influence was slight or scarcely perceptible before the middle of the second decade of the century. Doubtless the first acquaintance with the Romantic philosophy and literature of Germany was made through Mme. de Stael's celebrated work, "*De l'Allemagne*," first published and translated into English in 1813; a criticism of this work appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1819, and was restated in the same year in the *Analectic Magazine* (Phila.) and the *Quarterly Review* (N. Y.). Then the return home of the young Americans, Ticknor, Everett, Bancroft, Dwight, and others, from study at Göttingen and other German universities, bringing with them an enthusiasm for German educational methods and scholarship, and their subsequent articles on German art and thought, which appeared in contemporary magazines, were of great influence and weight in awakening an interest in this direction. An impulse to the study of German and a testimonial to the interest in the language was given by the appointment of Dr. Charles Follen, a German refugee, as teacher of the language in Harvard College in the fall of 1825, and his later appointment to a professorship in 1830. Reviews of German works, critical and literary, and stray bits of translation continued to appear with much greater frequency in the magazines, and in view of the fact that the Transcendentalists eagerly greeted each contribution to the new philosophy and looked abroad for support and encouragement, the orthodox party began to regard Germany and German writings as hot-beds of doubt and dissension, full of contamination, moral laxity, and godlessness. Needless to say, the word German came to carry with it all sorts of ridiculous and extravagant notions. The conservative Unitarian

held up his hands in horror at the mere mention of German theological, philosophical, or literary teaching. We find Dr. Channing, herald of the new era as he was, cautiously counselling William Emerson in 1823 to study at Cambridge rather than Göttingen, "believing that. . . . the best education for a minister in New England, taking into account the moral influence and religious feeling, can be obtained at Cambridge"<sup>2</sup>; and in the *Christian Review* as late as 1836, ten pages are given up to the discussion of the question—"What are the dangers and benefits incident to a minister from the study of the German language?" But notwithstanding all these warnings the interest in German continued to increase rapidly. New England suffered, as Theodore Parker ironically put it, a veritable "German epidemic" which infested all classes and caused undue alarm and worry. There were many stern, unyielding antagonists and there were hosts of eager students and ready champions. Among the various articles those of George Ripley in the *Christian Review*, especially on Herder in 1835, and on Schleiermacher in the following year, did much to dispel the notion that German philosophy and theology were irreligious.

The most important channels for conveying the spirit of German idealism to the English-speaking world and thus to New England were, however, the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle, and their influence was immeasurable. To them and to Wordsworth the Transcendentalists were probably most indebted, and it was to their writings that they looked for encouragement and moral support. Channing found in Coleridge and Wordsworth a higher form of thought than either the Trinitarian or the Unitarian, and the "Sartor Resartus" took him completely by storm, "not as giving him new ideas but as a quickener of all his ideas."<sup>3</sup> And Emerson in 1840 wrote of Wordsworth's influence: "We saw the stars shine, we felt the awe of mountains, we

heard the rustle of the wind in the grass, and knew again the ineffable secret of solitude. . . . . Here was no poem, here was poetry. . . . . The human soul in these last ages striving for a just publication of itself. . . . . more than any other contemporary bard, he is pervaded with a reverence of somewhat higher than (conscious) thought. . . . . a wisdom of humanity." (Wks. XII, p. 320). A deep love for the soul of nature, an interest in the minor aspects of common life and a new poetic diction were the gifts of Wordsworth to Transcendentalism, and his influence upon the contemporary poets was by no means inconsiderable.

Coleridge furnished more directly an impetus to new philosophical speculation and was the means of introducing the results of the German metaphysicians to New England. His works evidently aroused but little interest until the republication of the "Aids to Reflection" in 1829, with a scholarly introduction by James Marsh, President of Vermont University, in which attention was called to the spiritual depth of the idealistic philosophy and the distinction between the Reason and the Understanding was emphasized. Alcott writes: "The perusal of the 'Aids to Reflection,' 'The Friend,' and the 'Biographia Literaria,' at this time (1833) gave my mind a turn toward the spiritual. I was led deeper to seek the grounds even of experience, and found the elements of human consciousness not in the impressions of external nature, but in the spontaneous life of the spirit itself, independent of experience in space and time."<sup>4</sup> In 1829 Emerson notes in his Journal (J. II, p. 277): "I am reading Coleridge's 'Friend' with great interest, he has a tone a little lower than greatness—but what a living soul, what universal knowledge! . . . . . there are few or no books of pure literature so self-imprinting, that is so often remembered as Coleridge's. . . . . it is only one more instance of what is always interesting, the restless human soul bursting

the narrow boundaries of antique speculation and mad to know the secrets of that unknown world, on whose brink it is sure it is standing." Perhaps it is James Freeman Clarke who states Coleridge's influence best of all in his autobiography<sup>5</sup>: "Coleridge, the philosopher, confirmed my longing for a higher philosophy than that of John Locke and David Hartley, the metaphysicians most in vogue with the earlier Unitarians down to the time of Channing. . . . Coleridge showed me from Kant that though knowledge begins with experience it does not come from experience. Then I discovered that I was a born Transcendentalist." Coleridge, then, emancipated the Spirit, and to him as a liberator the Transcendentalists owed very much. In fact Margaret Fuller characterized the benefits which his writings conferred upon the age "as yet incalculable." By his efforts chiefly the philosophy of German Romanticism—notably the moral inspiration of Fichte and the metaphysical speculation of Schelling—found large following in New England, and it was for this reason indubitably that the philosophy of Transcendentalism in its broad outlines stood nearer to these men than to any other of the German idealists. Frederick Henry Hedge, in an article in the *Christian Examiner* for March, 1833, warmly commended the new philosophical views and thus helped give them a wider acquaintance in New England. But one must remember that such knowledge thus obtained was knowledge at second hand, for Coleridge left his own touch upon whatever passed through his intellectual and artistic workshop.

Carlyle's great essays on German literature and literary men appeared in the magazines during the years 1827-28, and opened to his countrymen and to America a new world of thought and life. His activity as a cultural force reminds one strongly of Fichte; both emphasize the moral-will in man and stress the doctrine of



Work. Yet Carlyle's importance for us lies chiefly in his position as an admirer, defender, and apostle of Goethe, and hence we shall treat him at greater length later. Of his influence, on the whole, J. F. Clarke writes<sup>6</sup>: ".....the voice of Carlyle—a man who could come face to face with Truth..... Endowed with a high degree of the intuitive faculty,—a born seer, a prophet, seeing the great realities of the universe with open vision..... He taught us to look at realities instead of names—to see God in the world, in nature, in life, in providence, in man..... Faith was once more possible.....he did not seem to be giving us a new creed, so much as inspiring us with a new life." His enthusiasm for German literature kindled an unbounded interest in the subject, as Clarke attests: "We knew other young men and young women who taught themselves German in order to read for themselves the authors made so luminous by this writer." His translations and original writings remained among the most potent forces of the Transcendental Movement.<sup>7</sup> Emerson as early as 1832, before the beginning of their long friendship, termed him "my Germanick new-light writer," and said of him, "he gives us confidence in our principles." (J. II, p. 515).

But there were other agents active in New England in affording a larger acquaintance with the spirit of the European revolt and in interpreting the meaning of the new idealistic philosophy. Not only was it through English channels that these views became disseminated but also through French. Though few people could read German well, many could read French, and the results of French speculation were reviewed and reported. From 1834-38 the eclectic philosophical treatises of Cousin were translated and widely circulated and reviewed, in particular the "Introduction to Philosophy," translated by Prof. C. Henry, and the "Comparative View of Different Philosophical Systems." In 1838-42 the publication of George

Ripley's "Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature" in fourteen attractive volumes, brought many readers into better acquaintance with the new teaching. The "Philosophical Miscellanies," as the opening volumes were called, gave a careful and critical introduction and analysis to the works of Cousin, Jouffroy, and Constant, and with the many well-chosen excerpts in this collection gave a good illustration of the trend of French idealistic thought. In the eighth and ninth volumes W. H. Channing gave his version of Jouffroy's "Introduction to Ethics;" and the other volumes were devoted more especially to the German writers, as the third, in which John S. Dwight presented translations from the lyric verse of Goethe and Schiller with an elaborate and critical preface; the fourth, containing Margaret Fuller's translation of Eckermann's "Gespräche mit Goethe;" the fifth, the sixth, and seventh, giving C. C. Felton's translation of Menzel's History of German Literature; the tenth and eleventh, DeWette's Theodore, by J. F. Clarke; the twelfth and thirteenth, DeWette's Ethics, by Samuel Osgood; and the fourteenth and last, a selection of German lyrics by Charles T. Brooks. These volumes had a marked influence upon the educated reading-public.

Thus we see by the time of the appearance of Emerson's "Nature" in 1836, called the "first document" of the Transcendental group, the results of the old world revolt had not only penetrated into the new, but were widely disseminated and eagerly read. German was being studied by the leaders of intellectual culture to obtain a more intimate acquaintance with the sources of idealistic thought and literature. In Coleridge more especially, New England found an introduction to the Romantic philosophy and thus was better prepared to develop its liberalism from a dialectic basis; in Carlyle was found an introduction more particularly to the Romantic litera-

ture which he interpreted in terms of his moral idealism. New England itself furnished the puritanic soil in which the new seeds were to take root and spring forth.

The new era, in America as in Europe, was, then, a revolt directed against the old and established conventions in life and thought. It remains now to distinguish briefly between the characteristic nature of the reaction as it found expression amongst different peoples and on different soil. The Romantic Movement in Europe makes its presence felt at some time in almost all reading and thinking nations, its influence spreading from one to the other. Thus it appears in England, in France, and in Germany, in three distinct revivals, each characteristic of its own time and place, yet all more or less intimately related in basic tendency. The English Romanticists, starting out independently, soon influenced and were in turn influenced to some extent by the writers of the German Storm and Stress, and again their influence upon the romancers and poets of the later German Romantic School was in no wise insignificant. The French revolt appearing upon the scene later under the stormy leadership of Victor Hugo was in turn profoundly influenced by both the English and German writers and thinkers. The work of Mme. deStael was of greatest service in its interpretation of the German philosophical and literary thought to the other nations. English and French Romanticism were essentially literary movements; German Romanticism was especially significant in its critical and philosophical rather than in its purely literary product. American Romanticism, or Transcendentalism, remained true to the temper of New England. In its beginnings independent and religious, it was soon flooded, as we have seen, by the "new views" from Europe, and became in general more philosophical; yet, however erratic its flight, it was always "Romanticism on Puritan ground." It sub-

stituted more especially philosophical for theological tenets in religion, and like Coleridge it stood closer to Kant in its doctrine than to any other of the later Romantic thinkers.<sup>8</sup>

No words better illustrate the spirit that prompted the New England thinkers to break away from all the accepted norms of thought than the opening of Emerson's "Nature" (1836): "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship."

The Transcendentalist was an individual trusting above all in the intuitions of his soul, which to him was a part of the Divine Nature. He was a devotee of solitude and of nature, a child of the present, to whom the immediate moment contained in the mind the meaning of all past and future experience. He was an apostle of self-culture, of the expansion of the individual soul in its largest manifestations and a lover of the good, the true, and the beautiful.

The Transcendental period, like all other periods of its kind, was distinguished by an interest in the speculations and literatures of all ages and peoples. Not posses-



sing a systematic philosophy itself, it asserted primarily the divinity of man, and assimilated to itself the idealistic teachings of eastern and western thought. Whatever could give strength and faith to its following, whoever taught the reality of the Spirit and the fallibility of sense was its master. Except in one or two instances, the Transcendentalists were not scholars. They communed with the Spirit as it had found expression through the great minds of all past ages and lands, and they treasured in the poet or philosopher what they themselves were quietly evolving in their own minds, what to them was a confirmation of their own budding thought. They yielded to the charm of Plato, of Swedenborg, of Goethe, not unconditionally, but always in so far only as the light of their own vision would permit. All else they either dismissed or denounced.

The center of the Transcendental activity was in and about Boston. A journal, the "Dial," chiefly critical, by which they hoped to explain and propagate their teachings, was the outgrowth of their efforts. They held meetings for the discussion of the new views and formed the "Transcendental Club," but the members soon scattered, and with the extinction of the Dial in 1844 active interest in the Movement as such may be said to have ceased. On the whole, Transcendentalism was never a popular movement; the tendencies of the time were rather in the direction of practical reform, and though the Transcendentalists, as we know, were not indifferent to such issues, they were rather reformers in things of the Spirit and thereby of the practical side of life. Thoreau was a typical Transcendental reformer; one who, in Emerson's words, felt himself called upon "to renounce everything which is not true to him and put all his practices back on their first thoughts, and do nothing for which he had not the whole world for his reason." (Wks. I, p. 248).

## I—2. GOETHE AND GERMAN ROMANTICISM.

One of the most potent influences of the German Romantic revolt was that exerted by the poet Goethe. He it was to whom the German Romanticists looked for spiritual guidance and encouragement. Him they acclaimed as the greatest personality and poet of his time; his favor they courted; for in him was incorporated as in none other the genius and wisdom of his age. Of all German writers he was the most widely read, the best-known, and the most-discussed among the New England Transcendentalists. Of him they were most generous in praise and most cruel in censure, and in their criticism of him they revealed most intimately the strength and weakness of their own views and convictions. In order to read his works they studied German, and his name became one to conjure with in New England.

But what, we ask, was Goethe's position in the general Romantic revolt? In how far was he in accord with the ideas of the Romanticists, and to what extent did he differ from them in temper and aim? What was their relation to and opinion of him?

In him, it has been said, the German eighteenth century was completed and summed up, while the nineteenth was almost in its every aspect reflected or foretold. He was one of the literary leaders of that first outburst of emotionalism on German soil which we have discussed as the Storm and Stress movement. He was its poet as Herder was its prophet, but this movement in its exuberance of passion and energy was comparatively short-lived, though its influence was far-reaching and rich in result. The later Romantic School, under the leadership of the brothers Schlegel, was, as we have seen, secured in its position by a distinct philosophical evolution. Its leaders were men permeated with the new philosophy and very much interested in aesthetic speculation, and

they sought to understand with greater definiteness what the Storm and Stress had been content merely to experience. In the interval the Critical Philosophy had come to bring clarity and stability, and the Romanticists were quick to take advantage of its teaching and to go forth from it strongly re-enforced. Goethe, however, remained largely independent of this philosophical movement; he was not much given to metaphysical speculation and as an artist preferred study in the concrete to that in the abstract. His manner of looking upon life remained thoroughly objective; he observed the phenomena of nature as such, as a scientist and artist, and therefrom deduced his conclusions. He was content to revere the realm of the unknown which lay out and beyond the boundaries of sense, but was loath to investigate and seek to analyze it, for such speculation, he thought, tended nowhere. "Das schönste Glück des denkenden Menschen ist, das Erforschliche erforscht zu haben und das Unerforschliche ruhig zu verehren." (Wke. 39, p. 100).

He remained in art and thought a realist, always in touch with life, and developed his own ethical and aesthetic views independently in the light of his own conscience and experience. He cared not to systematize his knowledge, but ever sought for fundamental principles. Whatever in the philosophical speculations of all times he found especially fruitful for his own development and productive of the largest benefit to mankind, he accepted. In his multifarious labors he laid the main stress always upon the synthesis, not upon the analysis. "Dich im Unendlichen zu finden, Muszt unterscheiden und dann verbinden." He arrived at conclusions by his method of careful, scientific observation of the facts of experience, to which was added the creative imaginative power of the artist, so that Emerson could truly say of him: "He is an apology for the analytic spirit of the period, because of his analysis always wholes were the result." It was

the instinct of the artist that gave him the key to the mystery of mysteries.

Herein lies the line of division between him and the Romanticists. Though both Goethe and the Romanticists were to a certain extent children of the Storm and Stress, they followed such different lines of development that in course of time their life and thought showed most striking divergence. Goethe, following the inherent bent of his nature, submitted himself to the schooling of hellenic culture, where alone his artistic sense of form found satisfaction, and after the Italian journey in the middle of the eighties he returned home clarified in vision, matured in thought, and assured of his mission as a poet. As a realist his all-absorbing interest was now nature and its processes as revealed in all living organisms, and it was by careful and objective observation and study—*reine Anschauung*—of these processes that he hoped to find a clue to the meaning of life. He remained a citizen of this world, a child of nature, hoping through a study of the finite to attain the infinite. "*Willst du ins Unendliche schreiten, Geh nur im Endlichen nach allen Seiten.*" The result was renewed activity as a scientist, a hellenism or classicism of form as an artist, and ripe practical wisdom and counsel as an observer and student of life.

The Romanticists, on the other hand, had schooled themselves in the Idealistic philosophy; they were students of the Kantian teaching and especially that of his disciple Fichte, to whose intense subjectivity their natures responded and whose problems they sought to solve. "*Die höchste Aufgabe der Bildung,*" said Novalis, "*ist, sich seines transzendentalen Selbst zu bemächtigen, das Ich seines Ichs sogleich zu sein,*" for according to the early Romanticists the solution of the fundamental questions of life could be arrived at only through the mastery of the Transcendental-ego. Their interest and labor began where Goethe's ended. Going forth from a sub-



jective construction, they sought to fit the empirical world into their metaphysical scheme, whereas Goethe, by observation of the empirical world, sought to arrive at the principles and laws that govern all being. The distinction is the one which Goethe draws when he says: "Alle Empiriker streben nach der Idee und können sie in der Mannigfaltigkeit nicht entdecken; alle Theoretiker suchen sie im Mannigfaltigen und können sie darin nicht auffinden." (Wke. 4, p. 250). To the Romanticists the world of the Ideal alone had true reality, and into it they projected themselves and in their art aimed to give to it expression. Their endeavor was to realize the ideal, whereas Goethe's was to idealize the real, or, as expressed in Merck's admonition to the young Goethe: "Dein Bestreben, deine unablenkbare Richtung ist, dem Wirklichen eine poetische Gestalt zu geben; die andern suchen das sogenannte Poetische, das Imaginative zu verwirklichen." (Wke. 25, p. 67). Thus while Goethe remained ever in touch with the reality of things as revealed to the senses, but never blind to an ideal interpretation, the Romanticists lost more and more their contact with reality and the facts of experience. Fundamentally we have here two radically different types, which were bound to come into conflict with one another. Yet, in result there is much in common, as a comparison of the Goethean philosophy of nature and that of Schelling discloses.

What the Romanticists objected to in Goethe was, we would infer, his close touch with the practical details of life and the facts of experience, his worldliness and scant sympathy with the young visionary and theorizer. It was the case of the conservative resisting the efforts of the young enthusiastic idealist to undermine the existing institutions of life without offering anything definite or effective in substitution. As an artist and poet, they hailed him as the greatest literary genius of the age and

did much to make him understood amongst his countrymen, but his aloofness from them and his seeming indifference to many of their pet ambitions doubtless did much to help cool their ardor, as did his continued friendship with Schiller. On his part, though he sympathized warmly with their efforts and ideas, he was repelled by their vague transcendental effusions and after their extravagant aesthetic appreciation of and final conversion to Catholicism openly expressed his displeasure. In another respect a distinction is to be noticed, this, however, in the main a corollary to the fundamental issue. Goethe's long and rich experience, his constant contact with and his untiring observation of the practical affairs of life had taught him the value of resignation and self-denial. Here was an ethical virtue which the Romanticists could not learn to appreciate. Goethe considered it imperative for man to realize his limitations and practice self-renunciation, and he firmly believed and taught that man's highest satisfaction and reward was to be found in strenuous social endeavor. Only in constant activity and labor could the individual attain personal happiness.

Novalis's criticism of Goethe is typically Romantic and well represents the Romantic attitude: "Goethe ist ganz praktischer Dichter. Er ist in seinen Werken, was der Engländer in seinen Waren ist; höchst einfach, nett, bequem und dauerhaft. . . . Er hat, wie die Engländer, einen natürlichen ökonomischen, und einen durch Verstand erworbenen edeln Geschmack. Beides verträgt sich sehr gut, und hat eine nahe Verwandtschaft, in chemischem Sinn. In seinen physikalischen Studien wird es recht klar, dasz es seine Neigung ist, eher etwas Unbedeutendes ganz fertig zu machen, ihm die höchste Politur und Bequemlichkeit zu geben, als eine Welt anzufangen und etwas zu tun, wovon man voraus wissen kann, dasz man es nicht vollkommen ausführen wird, dasz es gewisz ungeschickt bleibt, und dasz man es nie darin zu einer

meisterhaften Fertigkeit bringt. Auch in diesem Felde wählt er einen romantischen oder sonst artig verschlungenen Gegenstand. . . . . Wie der Physiker Goethe sich zu den übrigen Physikern verhält, so der Dichter zu den übrigen Dichtern. An Umfang, Mannigfaltigkeit und Tiefsinn wird er hier und da übertroffen; aber an Bildungskunst, wer dürfte sich ihm gleichstellen? Bei ihm ist alles Tat—wie bei andern alles Tendenz nur ist. Er macht wirklich etwas, während andre nur etwas möglich oder notwendig machen. Notwendige und mögliche Schöpfer sind wir alle—aber wie wenig wirkliche. Der Philosoph der Schule würde dies vielleicht aktiven Empirismus nennen. Wir wollen uns begnügen, Goethens Künstlertalent zu betrachten und noch einen Blick auf seinen Verstand werfen. An ihm kann man die Gabe zu abstrahieren, in einem neuen Lichte kennen lernen. Er abstrahiert mit einer seltenen Genauigkeit, aber nie ohne das Objekt zugleich zu konstruieren, dem die Abstraktion entspricht. Dies ist nichts als angewandte Philosophie—und so fanden wir ihn am Ende zu unserm nicht geringen Erstaunen auch als anwendenden, praktischen Philosophen, wie denn jeder echte Künstler von jeher nichts anders war. Auch der reine Philosoph wird praktisch sein, wenngleich der anwendende Philosoph sich nicht mit reiner Philosophie abzugeben braucht—denn dies ist eine Kunst für sich, (Goethens Meister). . . . . An Strenge steht Goethe wohl den Alten nach—aber er übertrifft sie an Gehalt—welches Verdienst jedoch nicht das seinige ist. Sein Meister kommt ihnen nah genug—denn wie sehr ist er Roman schlechtweg, ohne Beiwort—und wie viel ist das in dieser Zeit! Goethe wird und musz übertroffen werden,—aber nur wie die Alten übertroffen werden können, an Gehalt und Kraft, an Mannigfaltigkeit und Tiefsinn—als Künstler eigentlich nicht, oder doch nur um sehr wenig, denn seine Richtigkeit und Strenge ist vielleicht schon musterhafter.

als es scheint." Of the "Meister" Novalis in much the same spirit notes: "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre sind gewissermaßen durchaus prosaisch und modern. Das Romantische geht darin zugrunde, auch die Naturpoesie, das Wunderbare. Er handelt bloß von gewöhnlichen menschlichen Dingen, die Natur und der Mystizismus sind ganz vergessen. Es ist eine poetisierte bürgerliche und häusliche Geschichte. Das Wunderbare darin wird ausdrücklich als Poesie und Schwärmerei behandelt. Künstlerischer Atheismus ist der Geist des Buchs. Sehr viel Ökonomie; mit prosaischem, wohlfeilem Stoff in poetischer Effekt erreicht."<sup>9</sup> In the "Heinrich von Ofterdingen" Novalis attempted a "Meister" that was to be true to the Romantic ideals.

Goethe, then, stands forth as one of the leading figures in the larger general Romantic Revolt as it swept over Europe after the downfall of the rationalistic philosophy of the Enlightenment, but he can in no way be intimately associated with any one of its more distinctive phases. For that his genius was too great, too universal. The Romanticists, it is true, could find much, very much, in his works which would seem to point him out as their leader and master, but this would apply also to many others of the world's great minds. Fundamentally their natures diverged, however much there may have been to bring them together.

Among the New England Transcendentalists Emerson stands out as the leading spokesman. He represents to us the noblest type of the American Transcendentalist, and when we wish to acquaint ourselves with the leading ideas and principles of the Movement and to understand the motives which underlay this ethical, romantic revolt we turn involuntarily to his pages, for there we find them most sanely and clearly expressed. He was of the Movement, but not always in it; for he held himself aloof from all the vagaries, eccentricities, and petty reforms in which



its spurious energy found outlet. Though his thought towered into the heavens he was content to reside on earth. His reading was vast and varied, and he absorbed all that was best in the multitude of influences that helped to mold the spirit of Transcendentalism. And so he was also a reader and student of Goethe, and produced the most representative statement of the attitude which the Transcendentalists on the whole took toward the greatest of German poets.

It is our purpose, therefore, in this study to examine Emerson's reading and criticism of Goethe and seek to determine the foundation and relative worth of his opinions in the light of his immediate environment, New England Transcendentalism, which was the American expression of the larger Romantic Revolt.

## CHAPTER II.

### GOETHE IN NEW ENGLAND.

To obtain an estimate of the reception of Goethe's writings in America and the resultant reading and opinion of him as author and man, one turns to the numerous articles which appeared in the contemporary magazines, both English and American. These contain general discussions of German literary subjects, making mention of the latest publications and reviewing the literary masterpieces. Many, interspersed with bits of translation, appeared first in the British magazines, and were later reprinted in some leading American journal. Their aim was the introduction to the English reading-public of the works of German thought and scholarship, in particular those of their leading literary figures, principally Goethe. Later, after it had become possible to obtain more direct access to the works in question and after Goethe had become more than a mere name, one comes upon the written opinion of the New Englanders themselves as expressed in their works and correspondence. Here we are confronted in the main with two groups, the Transcendentalists and those whom for convenience we may designate as the non-Transcendentalists, composed of those who openly repudiated the "new-views" and of those who remained more or less indifferent to the controversy. In point of time one may divide the interest in Goethe into three general divisions;<sup>10</sup> the first terminates with the year 1817 and is characterized by little first-hand knowledge of German writings, being mainly

dependent upon English opinion; the second division falls between the years 1817-32,—from the return of Everett until the appearance of Carlyle's last article—and marks the period of introduction and preparation; the third division from 1832-45, is one of active interest and of original study, the outgrowth to a large extent of the previous efforts.

Up to 1817 there was a seeming indifference on the part of most Americans to all things German. The American was still almost entirely under English dominance in artistic and literary matters and looked to England for guidance. The fear that German writings were sources of moral contamination, before which the orthodox Unitarian must astutely intrench himself, prevailed in New England. As in England during the last decades of the eighteenth century, so in America German literature was known chiefly through the works of Gessner, Lavater, Gellert, Kotzebue, and also Schiller's "Räuber," and Goethe's "Werther," and the opinion prevailed that the Germans in their artistic effort suffered from a lamentable lack of taste. Even so late as 1816 Gessner is lauded as the only German writer not deficient in taste, whereas "Werther" and the "Räuber" are continually disapproved as of a harmful nature.<sup>11</sup> America passed through a Werther-fever, between the years 1784-91; six editions appeared between 1784-1807, the first being a reprint of the earliest English translation which had appeared five years earlier and which was itself a translation indirectly from the German through the French. The work enjoyed great vogue for a time and was as greatly censured as it was widely read. During the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth mention and reviews of Goethe's works appeared in the magazines.<sup>12</sup> The "Elective Affinities" and the "Dichtung und Wahrheit" were reviewed, and in 1814 there appeared an article on Goethe's "Farbenlehre" in

the Quarterly Review. In 1812 a noteworthy article upon the "Elective Affinities" came out in Walsh's American Magazine, in which the author found words of praise for Goethe, but censured his moral laxity. There was real life in the story, but "in many parts a total lack of delicacy."

In 1814 we find the articles on Mme. deStael's "De l'Allemagne" reprinted from the Edinburgh Review. This work was widely read and was regarded as an excellent introduction to German literature and philosophy. Almost all the later New England students of Goethe became interested in German writings and thought first of all through the reading of Mme. deStael. In her work Goethe was characterized as the one writer who united in himself all of those distinctions peculiar to the German "esprit," a poet most truly representative of the German genius; a man who, though he attained to the most sublime heights, never lost touch with earth; a personality calm and serene, giving, however, little consolation to the soul and viewing with an apparently cool objectivity both the evil and the good phases of life. Snatches of translation were given, among others of "Faust," which she failed to understand and therefore misconstrued. She was displeased with its lack of classic regularity and considered "Egmont" a far better piece. Her judgment colored most of the contemporary criticism of Goethe and his works, and though it served to widen the acquaintance of the world with German art and thought, it did not materially alter the conception then prevailing.

In 1817 appeared Edward Everett's noteworthy review of Goethe's "Dichtung und Wahrheit" in the North American Review, which, in view of the fact that its author had just returned from study in Germany, found an attentive public. Everett translated many passages from the work and attempted to present Goethe's life in

an impartial spirit, regretting the fact that the reading-public had thus far had so little opportunity to become acquainted with the German poet. "Goethe is as yet but inadequately known to us, by the translation of 'Werther' and the work of Mme. deStael.....Were we called upon to say which is the master-piece of Goethe, we should, with some hesitation, pronounce it to be 'Faust,' that alien from the empire of criticism. This work is already known to our readers, from the account of Mme. deStael, inadequate as a judgment, formed upon French models is, to decide upon a production like the one in question.....As for the piece itself considered as a poetical work, we do not know that it is of unexampled excellence, and it is far from being free from much, which needs must be called stuff. But there are flights and touches, we think, of which it would not be easy to find a parallel since Shakespeare."

The return of Ticknor, Everett, Bancroft, Hedge, and Calvert from abroad, their enthusiasm for German culture, and their subsequent activity in academic and scholarly labors was a great incentive in bringing about a more objective reading and study of Goethe's works. Some of them had been Goethe's guests in Weimar and had met and conversed with him upon subjects of mutual interest. Goethe's knowledge of America was enlarged by such meetings, and the visitors returned home fondly cherishing in their memories the few hours spent with him. They were able to furnish him welcome information concerning the limitless opportunities of the United States in both cultural and commercial directions. They procured for him geological specimens and books on America, and thereby fostered his interests in the geological formation of the American continent. They helped to keep him in touch with the latest English and American literary productions, and interested him in the educational endeavors in the new world. His remarkably prophetic interest in



an isthmian canal by which the two American continents were to be separated is too well-known now to need further comment. It was largely through the efforts of J. G. Cogswell, then a student in Europe and later librarian and professor of mineralogy and chemistry in Harvard and afterwards associated with G. Bancroft in the famous "Round Hill School" at Northampton, Mass., where German methods of instruction were introduced, that Goethe was induced to present in 1819 an edition of his scientific and poetic works to the library of Harvard University.<sup>13</sup>

Bancroft's article on Goethe was published in the North American Review in October, 1824. His plea was for an unbiased and just hearing of the claims of German literature as one of truly national significance. "Most eminent German writers have been misunderstood: German thought and poetry have been commonly criticised and condemned in America. The literature of a nation must be approached with respect.....contains all the noble feelings, the creed, the morals, and the aspiration of a people.....The culture and productions of the Germans have much that is original and peculiar; and every peculiarity only makes them more worthy of respect, just as reverence is especially due to anyone, who can teach new lessons on life and the mode of regulating the passions." Bancroft presents Goethe as the "most national poet of the Germans, the most fit representative of their literature." Think what one may of his productions, he says, one can no longer dispute his genius. His works, intimately connected with his private life, are not always "the highest kind of fine writing, for a poet must do more than feel deeply and breathe what he has felt into words. Preserving his own mind serene, he must observe and express whatever is pure and delicate and noble in human nature and the universe." This Goethe did not always do, he thinks. For that reason

many of his writings could not become popular in America, though one finds in them always a spirit of tolerance and kindness, not scorn. "By incorporating into his verse and his romances the experience of his life he becomes a practical guide, though he may more frequently warn against danger, than direct towards purity and virtue." Yet the critic is indignant, surprised, and disgusted, as he says, "that a man of fine genius, conversant with the sentiments and principles which are the living springs of beauty . . . . . should have stooped to win a disgraceful popularity by appeal to the weakness and unworthy passions of human nature, and darken the clear revelations of celestial beauty by the mixture of earthly passions." This article, by far one of the most appreciative that had yet appeared in America, presented Goethe, then, as a great genius, a "consummate master in his art" truly typical of the German spirit, and hence not to be too minutely measured by English and American norms of criticism; as one who sought to promote "love for the arts, for activity, for truth, to promote just and benevolent deeds," and yet liable to condemnation for "occasional levity" and "not of a purely moral tendency." In the *Studies in German literature* which appeared in the "Literary and Historical Miscellanies" of 1855, Bancroft adopts a much more severe and hostile attitude toward Goethe.<sup>14</sup> He ably characterizes Goethe's realistic bent of mind, however, in the words: "the character of Goethe's mind is that of self-possession. . . . . The peculiar mark set upon all his writings is a placid contentment with nature and reality. He never turned in disgust from the world in which he has his being. Life and man are his themes. He does not require to annihilate everything that is clear and individual around him, in order to gain free exercise for fancy in an ideal world; he is like the fabled giants, who were strongest when their feet touched the earth. There is in him no

trace of sickliness of mind, no lines worn by a diseased imagination. The beings who move, speak, and act in his works, are men and women, of veriest flesh and blood. It is of human nature that he unfolds the panorama."

In 1825 Dr. Follen became instructor in German at Harvard College. The meagre knowledge of the language at that time is attested by the fact that Goethe's name was pronounced 'Gō-īth' at Harvard.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Follen's lectures were well attended; he laid especial emphasis on Körner and Schiller and to a large extent disparaged Goethe. In his published lectures on Schiller we find a statement of this attitude toward Goethe,<sup>16</sup> and inasmuch as he became a most influential and respected friend of the Transcendental group and was himself of German birth and education, his opinion bore no little weight. He characterized Goethe as a man "essentially satisfied with things as they are, and with the powers that be. . . . His course was not that of a reformer. He kept aloof from all the great questions that divided men in politics and religion. He devoted his talents and himself wholly to the study of nature and art, to intercourse with men of genius and men of rank, if their hereditary station was graced by a love of literature and art, to the promotion of all institutions, the object of which was instruction and refinement." His interest in nature, aside from his art, led him to patient and painstaking scientific research. Still in all his works one finds "not one moral beau idéal." "He has access and does justice to. . . . all the longings of the heart. . . . except that one mysterious desire after infinite perfection, which, from its very nature, appears more in failures than in successful efforts, and thus produces the highest form of heroism, the character of the Martyr" . . . . "Goethe cannot be said to have struck out any new path, but to have tried his powers in every field of literature that had been cultivated by others, and to have raised



choice fruits in each." An artist, a scientist, a scholar, a man of the world, incapable of the highest vision, unable to appreciate the nobility of self-denial in any great unselfish aim, wilfully isolating himself from all troublous contemporary issues, intent upon his own well-being—such was the Goethe which Follen introduced to his students and friends.

The activity of these men and others prepared the way for the reception of Carlyle's famous Essays, which appeared in English periodicals from 1827-32, and were widely read in New England.<sup>17</sup> Carlyle was the champion of Goethe among English-speaking peoples, and to him more than to any other was due the eager interest and study of the German poet in New England during the next decade. In 1824 the translation of the "Lehrjahre" had appeared, which became perhaps the most censured and the most highly praised book of its time, into a dispute of whose relative merits and demerits were drawn most of the master minds of the contemporary literary world. In the introduction to the work Carlyle with caustic pen wrote of the prevalent notions of German writers and writings: ". . . . . in our ancient aristocracy of intellect we disdain to be assisted by the Germans, whom, by a species of second sight we have discovered, before knowing about them, to be a tumid, dreaming, extravagant, insane race of mortals; certain it is, that hitherto our literary intercourse with that nation has been very slight and precarious. . . . . Kotzebue still lives in our minds as the representative of a nation that despises him; Schiller is chiefly known to us by the monstrous production of his boyhood; and Klopstock by a hacked and mangled image of his "Messias". . . . . But of all there is none who has been more unjustly dealt with than Johann Wolfgang Goethe. For half a century the admiration, we might almost say the idol of his countrymen, to us he is still a stranger. His name, long echoed

and re-echoed through reviews and magazines, has been familiar to our ears, but it is a sound and nothing more; it excites no definite idea in almost any mind. . . . . (he) is regarded as a man of 'some genius,' which he has perverted to produce all manner of misfashioned prodigies; things false, abortive, formless, gorgons and hydras and chimeras dire."

To correct this misconception of Goethe and to teach the ethical value of his writings became Carlyle's aim in the *Essays*. In Goethe of all men of his time he found a "true Hero," the Hero as Literary man. "To that man too, in a strange way, there was given what we may call a life in the Divine Idea of the World; a vision of the inward divine mystery; and strangely, out of his Books, rises imaged once more as godlike, the workmanship and temple of a God. . . . . really a Prophecy in these most unprophetic times."<sup>18</sup> Goethe to him was: (1) an Artist, "in the high and ancient meaning of that term. . . . . the most striking instance, in our time, of a writer who is. . . . . what philosophy can call a Man. . . . . 'a clear and universal man'"; (2) "The Teacher and exemplar of his age. . . . . he has cultivated himself and his art, he has studied how to write, . . . . . there is embodied in these soft, melodious imaginations of his the Wisdom which is proper to this time. . . . . glimpses of the Unseen but not unreal World, that so the Actual and the Ideal may again meet together, and clear Knowledge be again wedded to Religion, in the life and business of men";<sup>19</sup> (3) "The Writer, and victorious Reconciler, of the distracted, clashing elements of the most distracted and divided age that the world has witnessed since the Introduction of the Christian Religion." . . . . . "The Strong One of his time, . . . . . the thing that was given this man to reconcile, . . . . . was the inward spiritual chaos. . . . . the Abyss out of which such manifold destruction, moral, intellectual, social, was proceeding";

(4) "A Thinker in the highest of all senses: he is a Poet. For Goethe.....the world lies all translucent, all fusible we might call it, encircled with Wonder; the Natural in reality the Supernatural.....revelations of the Mystery of all Mysteries, Man's life as it actually is".<sup>20</sup> With "perfect tolerance for all men and all things", with "majestic Calmness" and "perfect Clearness of Vision", "His grand excellency was this that he was genuine. As his primary faculty, the foundation of all others, was Intellect, depth and force of vision; so his primary virtue was Justice, the courage to be just. A giant strength.....the greatest of hearts.....a completed Man."<sup>21</sup> It was a Goethean message that Carlyle with all the stubborn strength of his being went forth to preach his countrymen in "Sartor Resartus"—"Reader! To Thee thyself, even now, he has one counsel to give, the secret of his whole poetic alchemy: *Gedenke zu Leben*. Yes, 'think of living'. Thy life, wert thou the 'pitifulest of all the sons of earth' is no idle dream, but a solemn reality. It is thy own; it is all thou hast to front eternity with. Work then, even as he has done and does.—'Like a star, Unhasting, yet Unresting.'"<sup>22</sup>

From the point of view of comparative literature Carlyle's Essays on German poetry are of prime importance. Alone among his influential contemporaries he was mediator of the Goethean philosophy. To Wordsworth Goethe was "an artificial writer," lacking clear moral perceptions, and though aiming to be universal, constantly exposing his individuality, which his character was not of a kind to dignify. Coleridge, and in much the same vein Southey, Lamb, DeQuincey, criticised Goethe "for his want of moral life, religion, and enthusiasm."<sup>23</sup> Carlyle discovered in him "by far the notabest of all Literary Men for the last hundred years," and recommended his works to all serious-minded students. "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe," he called. J. F. Clarke tells

us of the effect of his articles amongst the students of New England; ".....his articles on Goethe were the most attractive because he asserted that in this patriarch of German literature, he had found one who saw in all things their real essence, one whose majestic and trained intelligence could interpret to us in all parts of nature and life the inmost quality, the *terza essenza*, as the Italian Platonists called it, which made each itself. Goethe was announced as the prophet of Realism. He, it should seem, had perfectly escaped from words into things. He saw the world, not through dogmas, traditions, formulas, but as it was in itself."<sup>24</sup> Emerson, terming the essays "the most original and profound essays of the day," collected them and brought about their publication in 1838-39 and in 1835 had the first edition of the "Sartor" placed before the public.<sup>25</sup> The names of Emerson, Carlyle, and Goethe, became indelibly associated among the conservative element in New England with all that was dangerous and destructive to religious thought and moral well-being. "The writers warn all and sundry against me, and against whatever is supposed to be related to my connection of opinion, etc.; against Transcendentalism, Goethe, and Carlyle." Thus Emerson writes to Carlyle in 1838 after the publication of the "Divinity College Address."<sup>26</sup>

With Carlyle's articles the period of introduction practically came to an end. Goethe was no longer a mere name. Editions of his works were to be had at the libraries of Harvard College and at the Athenaeum, and in the private collections of such men as Hedge and Ripley. The period of active study now began, with the result that articles and reviews frequently appeared in the magazines, and works of greater pretension also came from American hands.

Among the larger publications, apart from Carlyle, which made their way to America and were eagerly read



by the students of Goethe, mention must be made of the work of Mrs. Sarah Austin, one of the most active mediators between German and English culture. In 1833 her "Characteristics of Goethe," which contained in the main translations of the works of Falk and von Müller, was brought out in London and received with great pleasure as giving more intimate knowledge of the life and thought of the great German. In the introduction to her work Mrs. Austin placed especial emphasis upon Goethe's universality of genius and his perfect ease in "every region of the Actual and Possible." His critics were unjust, she contended, in accusing him of apathy and selfishness and of being a partisan, for "his labors for the improvement of the human race were unwearied, calm, and systematic." His interest lay in whatever could be observed and described, not in the supersensible. He was preeminently the Artist, regarding art as "in and for itself moral, humanizing, and beneficent."

In 1839 there appeared two volumes in George Ripley's "Specimens," as has been noted; the first a translation of select poems of Goethe and Schiller with a preface by John S. Dwight, of which Carlyle in his letter of acknowledgment to Emerson said, "No Englishman to my knowledge has yet uttered as much sense about Goethe and German things;"<sup>27</sup> the other the translation of the first two volumes of Eckermann's "Gespräche" with an introduction by Margaret Fuller. These works were welcomed and reviewed in most of the leading periodicals.

In 1840 appeared Felton's translation of Menzel's "History of German Literature," which contained a most violent attack upon Goethe and itself called forth criticism and censure from every side, among others from the pens of Margaret Fuller and Theodore Parker. Menzel's work appeared in Germany in 1827, was reissued in 1836, and, aiming at a most comprehensive treatment of the general literary field, was in many respects strikingly

original and suggestive. It was well-written and widely read and exerted great influence amongst the uninitiated, though it was most partisan and misleading in its critical judgments. As a critic Menzel<sup>28</sup> lacked calmness and objectivity; he wrote with passionate energy and spared no lash, wherever his displeasure and anger were aroused. He was the leading opponent of the classical and romantic tradition and in some of his ideas was a precursor of the movement which is known as "Young Germany." He espoused the cause of patriotic idealism, interpreting it as the regeneration of the old, sound Teutonic spirit which would lead to the establishment of a united Germany. The present age was to him negative and sickly; it lacked the old idealism of health and faith and strength and was sadly corrupted by a vain egoism and pride. His dream was of a worthy and resolute people and of a strong political power. Like Treitschke he considered his own opponents traitors to their fatherland, for in his opinion his own position was always incontestable. He turned from both aestheticism and philistinism in horror, regarding them as forces hostile to the attainment of his ideal. He looked forward to a national and moral rather than a larger cosmopolitan and humanitarian state. He started out as an outspoken liberal, but ended as a most intolerant and arrogant conservative, allying himself with the forces of the law in his aggressive effort to suppress all free literary works. In common with the ideals of "Young Germany" he demanded an intimate union between art and life, contending that art and literature had a purpose only in so far as they were the handmaids of politics, religion, and social and moral teaching.

Menzel's work is remembered chiefly because of its vices, not its virtues, and in particular because of its shameless tirade against Goethe. One can admire his intense and indomitable patriotic idealism, but one turns in disgust from his selfish indifference to the means em-



ployed in meeting his opponents, for his political and aesthetic antipathies were but too often colored by his own personal and selfish interests. Once estranged from his erstwhile protégée, Gutzkow, for example, he spared no abuse in his attack upon him, and indeed upon the whole "Young German" movement, so soon as he found his own personal prestige in danger. He allied himself to the conservative forces in his attempt to pose as inquisitor and censor of all literary and artistic production. He is remembered as the denunciator, largely because of his vituperative attack upon Goethe.

The writers of "Young Germany," Heine, Laube, Gutzkow, and Börne, were all hostile to Goethe, though not equally so. They regarded him as representing a purely aesthetic stand-point, out of touch with their own aspirations, and social-idealism, and they were doubtless piqued by his seemingly indifferent superiority to their own early efforts and ambitions. In their youthful enthusiastic idealism they did not consider that his great labors lay with those of the preceding generation and that he had now entrenched himself in the conservatism of age. His cosmopolitanism was an affront to their dream of national regeneration, and they found him cool, condescending, egoistic, unpatriotic, and, in his large, tolerant acceptance of life, immoral. They were filled with a new spirit of decision and action, and were bitter in their antagonism to the passive and receptive temper of their predecessors and contemporaries, who took Goethe as their model. Laube draws the distinction well when he says of Goethe: "Er wollte betrachten und die Welt wollte handeln."

Menzel attacked Goethe in his first writings in 1823, finding in him a vain egoism and pride as dominant traits, and also all the effeminate vices of a degenerate time. There was in him none of the primal Teutonic strength and vigor which Menzel considered as alone worthy of

emulation. Jean Paul was his especial favorite, and in the "German Literature" he proclaimed Tieck as the supreme poet in his country's literature. Goethe was to him a corruptor of the public moral welfare, entirely lacking in the soundness and virility of Schiller, Tieck, and Jean Paul. He was a menace to German political development and to the religious and moral welfare of the land. He was an imitator of foreign models, a servant of princes and capable of any degradation to obtain for himself popular applause, and thus satisfy the vanities of his own egoism. Goethe's cosmopolitan spirit and admiration for the genius of Napoleon, whom the "Young Germans" justly hated as the oppressor of their country, was a spur to Menzel's wrathful antipathy. The great poet was characterized as a mere virtuoso, a gifted "Mode-dichter," a man of talent but not of genius.

"The entire phenomenon of Goethe is a reflex, a closely compressed and variously colored image of his age.....As Lessing emancipated the German mind from foreign influence, Goethe subjected it to this influence by toying with every people under the sun. The only good which he had with this bad tendency, and that by which he attained so great power, was his form—his talent of language, of representation, of dress.....We perceive egotism to be the inmost essence of his poetry, as of his whole life; not the egotism of the hero and the heaven-storming Titan, but only of the Sybarite and the actor, the egotism of the passion for pleasure and the vanity of art. Goethe referred everything to himself, made himself the center of the world, excluding everything that did not minister to his desires.....But he did not make use of his power and his high rank to elevate, improve, and emancipate men, or to announce and support any great idea whatever, or to fight in the battles which his contemporaries were waging, for right, freedom, honor, and country. By no means.....If he but

found applause, he cared nothing for the sufferings of his country. Nay, he took occasion to utter his venomous hate against the free and mighty movements of the times, the moment he was disagreeably affected and disturbed by them. . . . . When he had at length gained sufficient fame and applause by his really extraordinary talent, he gave himself up, like an adored stage-princess, to all his pleasures and petty caprices. He not only ceased to put the least disguise upon his egotism, but made it a matter of pride, and imposed upon his slavish readers by the unabashed display of his thousand vanities." As a critic Menzel lacked dignity and reserve, and allowed himself to be carried away by his heated emotions and irascible temper. He did not question the truth of his own statements, and even had he known Goethe better his view would doubtless have been unjust, for his attitude was the result of his own militant ideals and personal sympathies and artistic limitations.

This attitude had already been essentially expressed, though in more moderate terms, in America by Dr. Follen, whose sympathies, as we have noted, were with the young patriotic idealists of the type of Ernst Moritz Arndt and Theodor Körner. Both Follen and Menzel considered Schiller a nobler and greater poet than Goethe; Schiller was to them the poet of the Ideal, of freedom from all oppression, spiritual and physical, and of love for all that is good and true and elevating in human nature. So this view of Goethe, which is generally referred to Menzel, was current in New England, long before the appearance of Felton's translation, for Follen's opinion as that of a cultured and highly respected German surely exerted considerable influence in the community. This work, then, was beyond doubt particularly pleasant food for a certain group of individuals in their hostility to Goethe, Carlyle, and Emerson, even though Felton in the introduction to his translation

sought to alleviate the severity of the diatribe. For, as almost all the Transcendentalists were known as ardent students of Goethe, the orthodox, in accordance with their attack upon Transcendentalism, let loose their vehemence upon him.

In 1830 there appeared in the *Christian Examiner* a review of Goethe's "Iphigenie," by C. C. Felton, then professor of Greek, later president of Harvard, the same who translated Menzel. The drama was commended as preserving "the essential spirit of the Grecian character softened by the deeper sentiment of a more cultivated age." Goethe himself was presented as a genius of "unrivalled versatility," possessing the "power of entering into and identifying himself completely with every mode and phasis of human life," yet not subjected to an inferior egotistic spirit; but Felton, like all New Englanders, was offended and repelled by many of Goethe's "worthless and impure" characters and "licentious novels."

In 1833 and 1834 Andrews Norton, one of the severe opponents of the Transcendental doctrine, attacked Goethe in two articles in the "Select Journal of Foreign Literature," of which he was senior editor. In his scathing criticism of the "Wilhelm Meister" and the "Elective Affinities," he doubts: "Whether a cultivated English reader of correct principles and good taste could unhesitatingly lay his hand on any one of them (Goethe's works) and say it would have been a loss to mankind had it not appeared."<sup>20</sup>

In 1835 a very creditable review of Goethe's works by Leonard Wood, Jr., appeared in the *Literary and Theological Review*, and in 1836 in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, George H. Calvert, who had been a student at Göttingen and had himself visited Goethe in Weimar, published his lecture on German literature. Wood had praise for the "unexampled variety" of Goethe's work



and his thorough "acquaintance with the human heart," but he too was repulsed by the seeming lack of moral conscience in Goethe. "He refers everything unconsciously almost, to the standard of taste instead of the bar of conscience. His estimate of objects founded upon their agreeableness or disagreeableness, their external appearance, not upon their right or wrong,—their internal reality." . . . . "He writes like an Epicurean philosopher, more than like a Christian." To Calvert Goethe possessed, like Shakespeare, "a mind, which ranges over every province of human thought." He characterized the "Wilhelm Meister" as "the greatest prose fiction ever produced."

In 1839 two noteworthy articles were brought out, the one a superior exposition of Goethe's literary product in the *New York Review*, the other a very severe and even abusive and Menzel-like arraignment in the *Christian Examiner* by Wm. Ware, its editor and owner. Ware sums up ruthlessly all the current censure of Goethe as writer and man, and his tone is as malevolent as his views are distorted. He contrasts Goethe and Schiller, heaping all the abuse upon the former and all the praise upon the latter. To him Goethe had no philosophy, no creed, no principles. Representative of his age, he came into a world of ruins, which he had neither courage nor strength to rebuild. He had no faith in God, in man, or in woman. He "never risked the frown of a German prince for anybody. . . . On political subjects he was discreetly silent, except that he adored rank. . . . ever ready with flattery for the ruling powers of the day." He was the poet who represented "the morals, the politics, the imagination, the character, of the broken-down aristocracy, that hovered in the skirts of defeated dynasty, and gathered as a body-guard round the bier of legitimacy." He was insincere, an artist, not a man; inferior to Voltaire, not only in genius and industry, but still

more in morality. His writings, in particular the "Meister," teach the "sovereignty of impulse," of yielding to passion and neglecting life's responsibilities. "He was one of the most wary, calculating, circumspect people of his times. . . . A free-press was not to him a desirable thing;" and Ware gives an entirely distorted interpretation of Goethe's phrase, "Freedom consists in knowing how to respect whatever is above us."<sup>30</sup>

The critic in the New York Review presents Goethe as a great student of nature, one who made the pursuit of truth as revealed by nature the occupation of his life. His interests were universal, and "his universalism led him to observe all things but to estimate them as it were equally." The human passions, the various and changing phases of the human heart and intellect engaged his careful attention as well as the phenomena of nature, and as regards the former he used himself as object, so that "every one of his works forms the result of a painful observation of himself." In this respect he was a colossal egoist. Calm, never forcing himself, sincere, industrious, above all an artist, he was "a passive and unmoved spectator" in the midst of the struggle and turmoil of his age. "Wilhelm Meister" receives mention as a "treatise upon or rather a digest of Universalism," whereas "Faust" is named the greatest poem of the age; but the "Wahlverwandschaften" is misunderstood and characterized as a "distorted picture drawn by one accustomed to treat the intellectual physically, to regard virtue and vice, happiness and anguish, bad passions and holy impulses, purely as phenomena." On the whole the review is one of the most truly appreciative of all the critical words on Goethe which appeared at this time. "To make the most of the present life, of present knowledge; to develop to the utmost the human intellect as it exists; and to look forward to their complete expansion, to their perfect development in some future existence, with faith, with placid



and unrepining hope; to be universal within the present limitations of humanity, and to trust for an universal and unbounded existence in a future sphere; this. . . . . was Goethe."

In the same year there appeared, too, a work by one of the foremost of American literary men, containing a statement on Goethe, which in a way gave a resumé of the contemporary attitude. This book was Longfellow's "Hyperion," called by Thomas Wentworth Higginson "the first real importation into our literature of the wealth of German romance and song."<sup>31</sup> As an artist, said Longfellow, Goethe revealed his character in the choice of subject, for he "never sculptured an Apollo, nor painted a Madonna. He gives only sinful Magdalens and rampant Fauns. He does not so much idealize as realize." Looking upon all things as objects of art merely, "he only copies nature," and hence belongs to the imitative rather than the imaginative school of art. As a man, Longfellow objected chiefly to his "sensuality," yet in the face of all adverse criticism maintained that "with all his errors and shortcomings he was a glorious specimen of a man. . . . . a kind of rhymed Ben Franklin," practical, philosophical, and with a propensity to scientific investigation.

We turn now to the Transcendentalists, who came more especially under the tutelage of Carlyle and stood in more intimate relation to Emerson. The principal statements representative of their attitude appeared in the "Dial" in the years 1840-42.

William Ellery Channing, we are told, was first introduced to German literature and thought by Mme. deStael. Coleridge and Carlyle then aided him where translations failed. Of the German writers "he knew Richter and Schiller and Goethe well.—Schiller's personality appealing to him more than Goethe's, whose selfishness was an offense." But "his judgment of Goethe

was by no means so harsh as we would anticipate. . . . . When the strain of 'Wilhelm Meister' was too great, he would say 'let us have something a little more enlivening'."<sup>32</sup> Channing's was an open mind and we may feel assured that he gave the German poet at least a fair hearing.

In the early thirties, even before the Transcendental spirit had really asserted itself, we find the young enthusiasts studying Goethe eagerly and with critical eye. James Freeman Clarke and Margaret Fuller were attracted to Goethe at about the same time, principally by the articles of Carlyle; and Frederick Henry Hedge tried to interest Emerson in German literature as early as 1828. That quick progress was made is shown by the fact that within a year Margaret Fuller had read the "Faust," "Tasso," "Iphigenie," "Hermann und Dorothea," "Elective Affinities," and "Memoirs," and that by 1834 J. F. Clarke had written an article on Goethe and Carlyle, which Emerson read "with great pleasure and a feeling of gratitude, at the same time with a serious regret that it was not published."<sup>33</sup> The judgment of F. H. Hedge on things German was doubtless that of an authority among the young Transcendentalists. He had accompanied George Bancroft to Germany in 1818, had studied there, and was one of the few members of the Transcendental group who possessed a really adequate knowledge of the German language. He was one of the staunchest defenders of Goethe in New England.

In Margaret Fuller Goethe had his most intelligent disciple in the new world.<sup>34</sup> Though not in all strictness a devotee of the pure Transcendental doctrine, her place in American literature is in and of the Movement. Goethe was her liberator and he became the "guiding-star" of her life. "My parent," she called him. From him she learned the art of self-culture, of individual and harmonious growth. She studied all of his works and all

of the writings upon them which she could procure. She translated the "Tasso" (1834) and the first two volumes of Eckermann's "Gespräche" (1839), and at the time of her death was collecting material for a Life of Goethe. Her two famous articles, one of which was a spirited answer to Menzel's criticism, appeared in the Dial in 1840-41, of which she was editor and leading-spirit. She characterizes Goethe as a man of marvelous attainment, as one whose mind "had embraced the universe," an artist and master, but nevertheless one who failed of the highest achievement. "He might have been a priest; he is only a sage." for the world to his purposes was only an "arena or a studio, not a temple." A student of life and nature he fulfilled his mission as their recorder, and hence is the "best instructor in the use of means, but not ends," a "poetic-artist" not a "prophet-poet," a "listener to nature, not a priest to the soul of nature." He was cheerful, true, and above all industrious, as his sixty volumes of labor attest; not a mere epicurean or a sensualist, if we consider his life as a whole, but rather one who loved "symmetry in external relations" and hence preferred "outward peace rather than inward joy." When he came to the parting of the ways—and to Margaret Fuller this was the renunciation of his love for Lili—he chose the "worldly-way." "From that era dates his being as a 'Weltweise'; the heroic element vanished irrecoverably from his character; he became an epicurean and a realist; plucking flowers and hammering stones instead of looking at the stars. . . . . He was right as a genius, wrong as a character." There is much of self-contradiction in Margaret Fuller's statements, due probably to different moods of thought and expression and betraying an uncertainty of definite judgment. This latter is to be met in almost all the critical opinions of the time, and itself is due perhaps to continual controversy in the critic's mind between his artistic sense and puritanic severity.

In much the same vein was Theodore Parker's criticism of the German poet. Parker's reading of Goethe was, we are told,<sup>35</sup> a deliberate exploration of his life and character. One of the most indefatigable students and omnivorous readers among the Transcendentalists, he was also among the most forceful and fearless personalities, a man of strong character, sturdy thought, and decidedly original opinions. He yielded at once to Goethe the scholar and read with amazement the "compact, systematic, vigorous" learning of the "Farbenlehre," and admired his lyrics and his other poems—"Hermann und Dorothea," my especial favorite—but to him Goethe was an "Artist, not a man." There came "no warm beat out of his heart. . . . He never seems to have looked on men as brothers, (and) viewed things as things to minister to his pleasure; second, as objects of art. . . . His perfect artistic skill is wonderful. In his finished works there is scarcely anything in bad taste." Again: "He was a great Pagan. His aim was to educate Herr Goethe. He leads one to labor, but not for the highest, not by any means for others. . . . Excess of good fortune was his undoing." Parker admired Goethe's "untiring industry," his power of observation and constant aim in study to find "the principle that showed itself in the result," but was pained by the "multiplicity of Goethe's love-affairs," which tended to make his life "unworthy of such a genius." Although to him less a man than Voltaire, less earnest, less humane, less intellectual by far, and exerting a lesser influence on humanity, Goethe was "wise, wide, full of practical sagacity, always the man of generous views, with little heart, except for his artistic creations. He has a wide range rather than a lofty flight. I admire his activity, his cheerfulness and his elegant self-reliance. Now and then he has a deep insight. But it seems to me that he is over-conscious of the process of his work."



Alcott, too, reflected the general Transcendental attitude.<sup>36</sup> He termed Goethe that one of "modern scholars" who more than any other stimulated his readers to pry into the mystery of Nature. "Nature vouchsafed him the privilege of reading her secrets," but he had no free entrance into the sublime unity of all things. His was not the highest type of poetic vision. "All he was, his Faust celebrates—admitted to Heaven, as Goethe to glory, without the fee that opens honestly its gates. . . . O! Artist of beauty! Couldst thou but have been equal to portray the Spirit of Spirits as cunningly as of Matter. But it was the temper of the age of transition, and thou wast its priest and poet."

In our judgment of the above critical opinions we must not be too severe. These critics had meagre opportunity for careful study of either Goethe's works or life; to them he was still much of a contemporary, and they were able to find very little material which gave them an unbiased, objective way of approach to his writings. Most of the works which they were able to consult were unsatisfactory; and the extravagant praise on the one hand and the acrid condemnation on the other could only elicit on their part a portrait of Goethe colored by their own taste and temper. Aside from this, one must recall that they had not only slight first-hand knowledge of Goethe, but that they for the most part had only scant preparation in the German language and were little conversant with the tone of a foreign civilization. In the main both Transcendentalists and non-Transcendentalists approached the subject from a puritanically-restricted ethical point of view, and their judgment was marred in this respect by their inability to understand the larger ethical significance of the Goethean philosophy of life. There was universal admiration for Goethe's marvelous and untiring industry and versatility, his zeal to know, his mastery of knowledge, and his powers of assimilation



and expression; his cheerfulness, practical sagacity, tolerance, easy self-reliance, and courage to be himself. Here the student in them paid respect to the individualist and sage. But the puritan in them condemned his seeming lack of moral conscience, both in regard to his own life and the lives of his artistic creations. There were, indeed, some, we are informed, who went so far as to think themselves "doing honor to the Bible by comparing it to Goethe,"<sup>37</sup> but on the whole the attitude was rather one of "qualified admiration." Moreover their democratic American nature was rebuffed by his apparent indifference to the great political problems of his day. The Transcendentalists, going forth from an ethical, romantic philosophy, criticised in much the same manner as the European Romanticists, though always with an ethical consideration. To them he was preeminently an artist and realist, a recorder of nature and human life, but not in the noblest sense a poet. In them were united the critical attitudes of the idealist, the puritan, and the democrat, and hence one finds in their statements reminiscences of both the German Romantic and the "Young German" criticism, just as one has found both of these influences at work in the community. His genius, they held, was that of intellect rather than that of character, and hence inferior, and so they failed for the most part to comprehend his significance as a creative-artist. Though they were unwilling to concede to him all the eulogy of a Carlyle, they were even less willing to accede unreservedly to the opprobrium of a Menzel or a Ware. From a religious standpoint the distinction was that of the puritan versus the hellenist; philosophically, it was that of the idealist versus the realist, the transcendentalist versus the empiricist; politically, it was that of the republican versus the aristocrat and monarchist. Parke Godwin, reviewing Lewes's "Life of Goethe" in Putnam's Magazine in 1856, reflects the general attitude well. He characterizes Goethe

as the artist of his age, but with the following qualification: "Neither he nor his age felt that out of the heart are the issues of life; that goodness is greater than truth; that affection is better than culture; that wisdom is only wisdom in so far as it is a manifestation of love."

## CHAPTER III.

### EMERSON AND GOETHE.

#### • I—EMERSON'S READING OF GOETHE.

Emerson's early education was typical of the New England temper and true to the family tradition and ideal. For generations the Emersons had been noteworthy members of the intellectual and clerical aristocracy, strong and sound mentally and morally, devout, cultured, self-reliant. They were men of ready practical sense as well as of nobility of spirit and of sterling independence in thought and act. There was in them not a little of the old Calvinistic austerity, a tendency which was liberalized by the more tolerant influences of Unitarianism and expressed itself in the suave and polished discourses of the Reverend William Emerson, Ralph Waldo's father. The mother's family was less robust, less acute perhaps mentally, but touched with a mystic or pietistic quality, remarkable for its spirituality of temperament and religious zeal. Both sides were happily united in Emerson and were evident from the very first.

He showed an early and sturdy mental independence and a vigorous determination to make his own way. The wisdom of self-denial was soon experienced and proved, and an inviolable trust in the Moral-sentiment was an early acquirement, perhaps, rather, an inheritance. Solitude and contemplation were marked traits of the boy as of the man, and books, especially those of his own choosing, were the nourishment of his mental life. His course at Harvard College, which he entered in 1817, brought

him no particular distinction. He was a fair but by no means an exceptional student, and preferred to follow his own interests in study to those of the prescribed course. He was an attentive observer and an eager reader, retiring in disposition, but mostly active among his own chosen group of friends. He attended the lectures of Ticknor and almost idolized Edward Everett, whom he mentions as opening up "a new morning" to his students by the introduction of the wealth of German criticism. "A chamber alone" was in his own words the prime advantage which his college-life afforded him; for it was in the solitude of his own room rather than among his fellows that the character of his mind was developed. The "notebooks" and "journals," which the young student kept while at college and which were continued throughout the greater part of his life, into which he was accustomed to note sundry events and opinions and in this manner bring clarity to his views, are to us a mirror of his mental growth, its struggles and problems, its manly independence, and noble tolerance and acceptance of whatever was good and true.

The years that passed between his graduation in 1821 and the publication of his first effort, "Nature," in 1836, were years in which the spirit was reaching out and beginning to assert itself. It was a period of reception and preparation, of wide reading and assimilation. Immediately after leaving college Emerson took charge of his brother William's school, which he left in 1823 to pursue studies in the Divinity School at Cambridge largely under the direction of William Ellery Channing. In 1826 he was "approbated to preach," but his health soon broke down, and he departed on a visit to the South to recuperate. He returned in 1829 and was ordained to assist the Reverend Henry Ware in the Second Church in Boston, of which he soon became pastor. In the same year he married. In 1832, because he found the ministration of

the communion incompatible with his own religious instinct and because of the consequent disagreement with his congregation on a question of dogma against the literal interpretation of which his whole being rebelled, he resigned his charge, and late in 1832, after the death of his wife, went on a trip to Europe. He visited Italy, France, and England, and met Landor, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and above all Carlyle. Upon his return to America he settled with his mother in Concord at the Old Manse, delivered occasional lectures and sermons in the neighboring towns and cities, and worked upon "Nature," which appeared in 1836, the first permanent expression of his transcendental philosophy.

The "Journals" reflect during these formative years the same spiritual influences which we have found operative in the development of Transcendentalism. Of note is the gradual breaking-away from a dogmatic position to one of greater tolerance and optimism, largely under the influence of sympathetic reading of the world's great books and of the idealistic philosophy as presented directly or indirectly in the pages of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, and especially in the living presence of William Ellery Channing. In Channing himself and in his sermons and writings, there was sufficient source of inspiration. Individual assertion became stronger and stronger; above all things Emerson as a disciple of Channing, determined to have trust in himself and the promptings of the Spirit within him. In 1834 (Nov. 15) he wrote: "Henceforth I design not to utter any speech, poem or book that is not entirely or peculiarly my work. I will say at public lectures and the like, those things which I have meditated for their own sake and not for the first time with a view to that occasion."<sup>38</sup> His reading was wide and various, but on the whole comparatively little had a determining influence upon his thought. Those passages which seemed to bear directly upon



problems then puzzling him or to confirm his own thought were noted and often copied in the Journals. Books of a serious intent were his favorites, especially the great expressions of the human mind in its attempts to understand and solve the meaning of all things, of the unity in the variety, of the permanent in the transitory, and of the eternity and universality of the Spirit. The Bible, Shakespeare, Plato, Montaigne, Plutarch, among many others, were read with eagerness and profit, and his interest in poetry would have led him "to the farthest verge of the green earth to learn what it was or was not." (J. II, p. 110).

Emerson probably first came in touch with German thought during his collegiate course at Harvard. He attended the lectures of Ticknor and Everett, both of whom had been students in Germany. He was also an eager reader of the best magazines, such as the *Edinburgh and Quarterly*, in the pages of which articles upon German subjects now and then appeared. Among the books which he desired to read in 1821, we find mention of Montaigne's *Essays* and Mme. deStael's "Germany" (J. I, p. 358). The latter was doubtless procured and read, for during the next few years intermittent references are made to it. Herder's name is mentioned in the reading-list from 1825-26, as is that of deStael. At this time too Emerson was becoming acquainted with Swedenborg through Sampson Reed's "Growth of the Mind." Closer touch with Germany came when his elder brother William left America to spend a year at Göttingen in study for the ministry. The doubts which beset the brother's mind and led him to renounce his intentions of entering the ministry and thus to reject the family tradition—even against the conventional advice of Goethe, of whom he sought counsel and who told him to resign himself to the world rather than disappoint the hopes of his family—must have deeply impressed Ralph Waldo and

strengthened his own determination to study at Divinity College and not to disappoint his mother. This seemingly worldly and practical advice of the old Goethe to the young idealist must have left a none too favorable impression upon Emerson's mind and was doubtless often recalled when he later took up the reading of Goethe's works. William soon after his return entered upon the study of law and gave lectures upon German literature in New York. Throughout these years Emerson's knowledge of German culture and life was, we may feel certain, quite casual, in no way subject to a premeditated interest, but merely that of the general reader of the current periodicals and books of note and worth. In fact, in 1828 Dr. F. H. Hedge, then first making his acquaintance, "tried to interest him in German literature, but he laughingly said that as he was entirely ignorant of the subject, he should assume that it was not worth knowing."<sup>39</sup> In 1829, as has been previously noted, he was reading Coleridge and thus becoming better acquainted with the spirit of German idealism. He read the "Friend," the "Aids to Reflection," and the "Biographia Literaria," and of these works seems to have placed most value upon the latter. In 1871 he said of this work: "that he did not see how a young scholar could do without it; and praised his definition of Genius, Reason, Imagination, and Fancy."<sup>40</sup> Carlyle steered like a meteor across his horizon in 1829-30, and the Essays as they appeared in the various magazines intensified any interest he may have had in things German, and above all introduced him to Goethe. Emerson, like almost all the contemporary students, owed his interest in Goethe primarily to Carlyle's efforts. In 1830 the "William Meister" in Carlyle's translation is the first one of Goethe's works to be mentioned in the Journals. Almost immediately notes and extracts from this and other works of Goethe and excerpts from the works of other German writers, notably, Lessing,

Schiller, Fichte, Novalis, occur, revealing a quickened interest. Carlyle's Essays, however, are fundamental, for a good many of these notes are taken directly from quotations from the German made by Carlyle and are a substantiation of some cherished thought of his own. This holds of the greater part of his reading at that time. In 1831 frequent mention is made of German writers: he reads Coleridge's translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein," and quotes from Schlegel's "Guesses at Truth." (J. II, 401). Schelling, deStael, Novalis, and Coleridge also find mention, and in 1832 Hegel and Jung-Stilling's Autobiography are added to the list. Carlyle's essay on Novalis must have been especially gratifying, for Emerson and Novalis as moral-idealists and mystic-philosophers have very much in common, and one would fain ask whether the former could not have derived, and perhaps did not derive, considerable spiritual comfort from the general tone of this essay and from the meagre but apt selection from Novalis's aphoristic fragments, which it contained. Of all the German writers with whom he became acquainted at that time, however, none impressed him more profoundly than Goethe, so that upon embarking for Europe in 1833, led partly by a desire to meet the three or four English authors whose works he had closely followed in the magazines, he felt as he later confessed, (Wks. V, p. 4) that, "if Goethe had still been living, I might have wandered into Germany also."

When Emerson resigned the charge of the Second Church in 1832 and entered upon his first European trip in 1833, the fundamental tenets of his future teaching were already firmly fixed in his mind. He was of the sort that develop slowly but securely. A perfect reliance upon the promptings of the Spirit within him and firm self-dependence added to a strong faith in the infallibility of the universal moral laws were the marked

characteristics of his thought. Abstract speculation possessed no charm for him; he was more a poet than a metaphysician. In a poem<sup>41</sup> which we find in the *Journals* for 1831 (J. II, 395) we find summarized in succinct statement much that has been troubling him from the earliest time, as his *Journals* show.

If thou canst bear  
Strong meat of simple truth,  
If thou durst my words compare  
With what thou thinkest in the soul's free youth,  
Then take this fact unto thy soul,—  
God dwells in thee.  
It is no metaphor nor parable,  
It is unknown to thousands, and to thee;  
Yet there is God.

He is in thy world,  
But thy world knows him not. '   
He is the mighty Heart  
From which life's varied pulses part.  
Clouded and shrouded there doth sit  
The Infinite  
Embosomed in a man;  
And thou art stranger to thy guest,  
And know'st not what thou dost invest.  
The clouds that veil his life within  
Are thy thick woven webs of sin,  
Which his glory struggling through  
Darkens to thine evil hue.

Then bear thyself, O man!  
Up to the scale and compass of thy guest;  
Soul of thy soul.  
Be great as doth beseem  
The ambassador who bears  
The royal presence where he goes.

Give up to thy soul,—  
Let it have its way—  
It is, I tell thee, God himself,  
The selfsame One that rules the Whole,  
Tho' he speaks through thee with a stifled voice,  
And looks through thee, shorn of his beams.  
But if thou listen to his voice,

If thou obey the royal thoughts,  
 It will grow clearer to thine ear,  
 More glorious to thine eye.  
 The clouds will burst that veil him now  
 And thou shalt see the Lord.

Therefore be great,  
 Not proud—too great to be proud.  
 Let not thine eyes rove,  
 Peep not in corners; let thine eyes  
 Look straight before thee, as befits  
 The simplicity of Power.  
 And in thy closet carry state;  
 Filled with light, walk therein;  
 And, as a king  
 Would do no treason to his own empire,  
 So do not thou to thine.

This is the reason why thou dost recognize  
 Things now first revealed,  
 Because in thee resides  
 The spirit that lives in all;  
 And thou canst learn the laws of nature  
 Because its author is latent in thy breast.

Therefore, O happy youth,  
 Happy if thou dost know and love this truth,  
 Thou art unto thyself a law,  
 And since the soul of things is in thee,  
 The law, the gospel, and the Providence,  
 Heaven, Hell, the Judgment and the stores  
 Immeasurable of Truth and Good,  
 All these thou must find  
 Within thy single mind,  
 Or never find.

Thou art the *law*;  
 The *gospel* has no revelation  
 Of peace or hope until there is response  
 From the deep chambers of thy mind thereto,—  
 The rest is straw.  
 It can reveal no truth unknown before.  
 The *Providence*  
 Thou art thyself that doth dispense  
 Wealth to thy work, want to thy sloth,  
 Glory to goodness, to neglect, the moth.



Thou sowest the wind, the whirlwind reapest,  
 Thou payest the wages  
 Of thy own work, through all ages.  
 The almighty energy within  
 Crowneth virtue, curseth sin.  
 Virtue sees by its own light;  
 Stumbleth sin in self-made night.

Who approves thee doing right?  
 God in thee.  
 Who condemns thee doing wrong?  
 God in thee.  
 Who punishes thine evil deed?  
 God in thee.  
 What is thine evil need?  
 Thy worse mind, with error blind  
 And more prone to evil  
 That is, the greater hiding of the God within,  
 And next, the consequence  
 More faintly, as more distant, wrought  
 Upon our outward fortunes.

There is nothing else but God.  
 Where'er I look  
 All things hasten back to him;  
 Light is but his shadow dim.  
 Shall I ask wealth or power of God, who gave  
 An image of himself to be my soul?  
 As well might swelling ocean ask a wave,  
 Or the starred firmament a dying coal,—  
 For that which is in me lives in the whole.

(J. II, 395 ff.)

Here are to be found in the germ five years before the publication of "Nature" important ideas which later received more complete expression in the "Essays," such as those of the Over-soul, Self-reliance, the Moral-sentiment, and Compensation—all fruits of the seed sown at an earlier date by William Ellery Channing.

Now those authors who gave confirmation to these thoughts Emerson quoted and cherished; others he severely criticised and put aside. To the former belonged Carlyle, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Germans, and

thus most of the quotations from these latter before 1833 bear directly upon some one of the above-mentioned ideas. The excerpts from Goethe too are of this nature, and those are given which illustrate his belief in man's spiritual dependence and touch upon his great power of observation and assimilation. (J. II, 348-349).<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to note that among the first to be found is the extract on the three religions from the "Wanderjahre," doubtless taken directly from Carlyle's essay.

During his first European trip, in 1833, Emerson read the "Italienische Reise" and the "Wilhelm Meister" at odd moments. We find him in Naples noting in his diary on March 16: "Last night stayed at home at my black lodging in the Croci di Malta and read Goethe" (J. III, 66), and remarking upon Goethe's impressions of Naples. In Florence, too, later in May, he was glad to be left "to Goethe and Sismondi, to pleasant study hours and to sound sleep." (J. III, p. 124). Emerson returned from Europe in better health and with new and cheerful faith in the future of his own country and its institutions. As a traveller he was never able to get away from himself, and his future mission as "a friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit," must have dawned upon him when on his return-journey he wrote in his Journal at sea: "The purpose of life seems to be to acquaint a man with himself. He is not to live to the future as described to him, but to live to the real future by living to the real present. The highest revelation is that God is in every man." (J. III, p. 201). Settled in Concord, this new life opened up to him, and as public-lecturer, thinker, and man of culture, he became within a few years the recognized mouthpiece of the Transcendental group, poet and prophet of the Soul.

The years 1834-40 mark his most active interest in Goethe as poet and man. During this time, as we remember, the Goethe cult was quite strong in New Eng-

land. The German language was being studied and German literature and music were finding ready appreciation in and about Boston. The articles upon Goethe were appearing in the magazines, and in 1836 The Transcendental Club, of which Emerson was a member, held its first meeting, and we may feel certain that Goethe and his works were not infrequently discussed there. The general interest in Goethe and the enthusiasm of his friend, Carlyle, doubtless spurred Emerson on to a more careful and critical reading. He studied German in order to read Goethe in the original and acquired, at least to some degree, a reading knowledge of the language. German, however, never became easy for him to read. (Wks. IV, p. 370). We find him as late as 1871, while crossing Illinois on the trip to California, reading Goethe's "Sprüche in Prosa" with the help of "a little German dictionary"—"He found it excellent time to study his German in the cars."<sup>43</sup> But this was long after his most active period of German study. In 1836 we find that he possessed in his library the "Nachgelassene Werke" in 55 leather-bound doudecimo volumes, printed at Stuttgart and Tübingen (Cotta) in 1832, and in the same year he wrote to Carlyle: "I read Goethe, and now lately the posthumous volumes with great interest." Alcott, Hedge, J. F. Clarke, and Margaret Fuller were his friends, and all were eager students of Goethe.

The Journals for 1834-1836 reflect these influences. Goethe, the writer and poet, the man of practical wisdom, is the recipient of praise and admiration, whereas Goethe the "man of the world," the Olympian and egoist, is censured in harshest terms. We read of the "wise but sensual, loved and hated Goethe." (J. IV, p. 28 ff). Much that was written during these years found its way later into the Essays and lectures and was restated at about the same time in the letters to Carlyle.<sup>44</sup> Not only were Goethe's works read, but many other books bearing di-

rectly or indirectly upon the German poet. Schiller, Novalis, Herder, Fichte, Tieck, Lessing, Schleiermacher, Schlegel, Schelling, Richter, Wieland, Börne, Winckelmann, were among the German writers whose names found their way into the Journals. Goethe's correspondence with Herder, Schiller, Zelter, Merck, Bettine von Arnim, was evidently more or less familiar to him, and he was acquainted with Eckermann and the critical efforts of Sarah Austin, J. Dwight, and Margaret Fuller. In 1838 he considered writing an article on Goethe—"It would give me new scope to write on topics proper to this age and read discourses on Goethe, Carlyle, Wordsworth, Canova, Thorwaldsen, Tennyson." (J. V. p. 17).

In September of the same year we find the first note of a failing warmth of interest. "But Goethe, Schleiermacher, lie at home unread. Many books are not as good as a few. Once, a youth at college, with what joy and profit I read the Edinburgh Review. Now, a man, the Edinburgh Review, and Heeren, and Blackwood, and Goethe get a languid attention." (J. V. p. 37). He seems to have come to prefer those works which contained Goethe's "wisdom" in straightforward, aphoristic statement, and he invariably took along a volume of this nature on his lecture tours. "So in travelling, how grateful at taverns is Goethe!" (J. V. p. 45). In 1840 he wrote to Carlyle: "You ask me if I read German and I forget if I have answered. I have contrived to read almost every volume of Goethe, and I have 55, but I have read nothing else; but I have not now looked into Goethe for a long time. There is no great need that I should discourse to you on books, least of all on his books; but in a lecture on Literature, in my course last winter, I blurted out all my nonsense on that subject, and who knows but Margaret Fuller may be glad to print it and send it to you?"<sup>45</sup> He here refers to the Lecture on Modern Literature which was published in the Dial in 1840 and con-

tains his first published statement on Goethe. It was also probably at this time that the verses, "Written in a volume of Goethe" (Wks. IX, p. 373), were penned, which show his preference for the study of life and nature to that of books.

"Six thankful weeks,—and let it be  
A meter of prosperity,—  
In my coat I bore this book,  
And seldom therein could I look,  
For I had too much to think,  
Heaven and earth to eat and drink.  
Is he hapless who can spare  
In his plenty things so rare?"

And in the essay on "Experience" in the second series, which was published in 1844, is to be found this statement of his literary preferences: "Once I took such delight in Montaigne, that I thought I should not need any other book; before that, in Shakespeare; then in Plutarch; then in Plotinus; at one time in Bacon; afterwards in Goethe; even in Bettine; but now I turn the pages of either of them languidly, whilst I still cherish their genius." (Wks. III, p. 55).

In the Journals after 1840 there is a gradual falling-off in the mention of and citations from Goethe. In his essay of that year his views were correlated and expressed, and he was enabled henceforth to adopt a calmer and less partial position. His admiration for Goethe's genius is less restricted; he seeks rather to fix his place historically as a cultural force. His censure has lost its sting, and a mellower temper is apparent in his attitude. The intense bitterness which characterized many of his statements in the earlier Journals and the Carlyle-correspondence has disappeared, for Emerson is no longer actively wrestling with Goethe's genius. He has found in him a wise man and prizes him as such, and having fixed him in his niche, so to speak, his mind is no longer



busily engaged with the German poet. To be sure, he at times rises in defense of Goethe against the latter's prejudiced and ignorant detractors, but the former intensity of interest never reasserts itself. In 1841 he read Menzel in Felton's translation and his opinion of the work must have been similar to that of Margaret Fuller and Theodore Parker, for he notes (Nov. 13): "I surprised you, O Waldo Emerson, yesterday eve hurrying up one page and down another of a little book of some Menzel, panting and straining after the sense of some mob, better or worse, of German authors. I thought you had known better." (J. VI. p. 125). In the years of study when he was first making Goethe's acquaintance and when he was learning to know at first hand the magnitude of Goethe's powers and the rich story of his life, from 1834-1839, there seems to have been a constant struggle in his mind between his judgment of Goethe the man, and that of Goethe the philosopher. He was torn from one to the other, repelled and attracted, and the two extremes, so diverse and distant, seemed irreconcilable in one and the same individual. As the years passed, however, his admiration for Goethe the constructive thinker, gradually gained precedence, and though he never could prevail upon himself to approve of Goethe the man, we feel that his aversion was steadily waning. In 1871, writing to Hermann Grimm, he said: "For Goethe I have always an ascending regard."<sup>46</sup>

This honesty of tribute to Goethe's genius is also expressed in the "Representative Men." In the last months of 1844 and the early months of 1845 Emerson gave no course of lectures in Boston, but spent his time in preparing this new series. Napoleon seems to have been the lecture first finished. In September, 1845, he wrote to Carlyle: "I am to read to a society in Boston presently some lectures,—on Plato, or the Philosopher; Swedenborg, or the Mystic; Montaigne, or the Sceptic;

Shakespeare, or the Poet; Napoleon, or the Man of the World; if I dare, and much lecturing makes us incorrigibly rash. Perhaps before I end it, my list will be longer, and the measure of presumption overflowed. I may take names less reverend than some of these—but six lectures I have promised.”<sup>47</sup> He began the course in December, 1845, and delivered it in Boston, Providence, and Lowell. As yet there is no mention of “Goethe, or the Writer;” perhaps, Goethe’s was one of “names less reverend” which he as yet hesitated to add to the course, but in view of his large knowledge and interest in Goethe we are not surprised to find him included later. The lectures were given also in England in 1847-48 and were published in 1850. This essay on Goethe as the Writer is Emerson’s final and largest statement on the German poet and testifies to the high regard in which he had come to hold Goethe and also to the latter’s prominence in Emerson’s literary life.

His reading of Goethe’s works, however, continued. In 1847 he re-read Goethe’s autobiography “in a new translation,” and in 1849 he wrote: “Bohn’s library now furnishes me with a new and portable Plato, as it had already done with a new Goethe.” (J. VIII, p. 35). In 1871 we have found him carrying the “*Sprüche*” upon his California trip, and in 1873 he had them on his journey to Egypt.<sup>48</sup> His interest now lay almost wholly in what so many scholars have termed the “wisdom” of Goethe, and we may feel assured that he had long ceased to react acutely to the life and works of the German seer. He felt Goethe’s influence most during those years when the reading and discussion of Goethe were most active in New England, the years when Transcendentalism was at the flower. In 1856 he wrote: “I am coming to do without Plato, or Goethe, or Alcott” (J. IX, p. 37), and in after years his Goethe-reading was probably much like renewing an old acquaintanceship, mellow and calm, no

longer full of ardor and warm with inspiration. Indeed, as above stated, he turned the pages languidly, though he still cherished the *genius*.

Emerson's interest in Goethe when at its height also led him to collect portraits and engravings of him. Visitors to the Emerson home have told us of the prominence given to Goethe in those things which help make up the atmosphere of the study and reveal individual taste and interest—books, pictures, etc. . . . Moncure D. Conway, writing of his visit to Emerson in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1864, says in describing Emerson's study: ". . . . . on the mantle were two statuettes of Goethe, of whom there were also engraved portraits on the walls. Afterwards, Emerson showed me eight or ten portraits of Goethe which he had carefully collected. The next in favor was Dante, of whom he had all the known likenesses. . . . ." <sup>49</sup> Likenesses of Swedenborg and Montaigne too decorated the walls.

In his autobiography <sup>50</sup> Conway also relates two incidents which show how well-known a name Goethe's was in the Emerson household. "One day when I was with Emerson and his wife he referred to Goethe and I perceived that the great German was a sort of bogey to her. She quoted verbatim two sentences from a letter written to her by her husband before their marriage in which he expressed misgivings about Goethe, beneath whose fine utterances he found "no faith." Emerson was silent and his wife went on in a way almost pathetic to describe her need of faith." . . . . "By the way, there was a droll relic of it (the Goethe cult) in the Emerson household; one of the children—Edith I think—had the fancy to name her handsome cat 'Goethe.' Emerson affected to take it seriously, and once when the cat was in the library and scratched itself, he opened the door and politely said, 'Goethe, you must retire; I don't like your manners.'" Such anecdotes may serve to give us an idea of

how intimately associated with his daily life Goethe's name came to be, not only intellectually but even as a household-word among the members of his family.

### III—2. EMERSON'S OPINION OF GOETHE.

An analysis of Emerson's two larger statements on Goethe, the one in the "Essay on Modern Literature" of 1840 and the other in the "Representative Men" of 1850, reveals in the main a similarity in treatment and result with one essential difference. In the former Goethe is regarded as typically expressive of the literary genius of the age, whereas in the latter he becomes representative not only of his time but also of the genius of the Writer of all times. The latter is a restatement of Emerson's opinion of Goethe as expressed in the earlier essay, with the emphasis placed upon a new point of approach. The "Journals" and the "Carlyle Correspondence" were the sources of many a critical statement that found its way in due time into the essays, for in them and especially in the former, his views were noted and jotted down, one might almost say, in the rough, fresh from the reading and consideration of the man and his works. In the public utterances the attitude is calmer, more philosophic, and less personal; there is less puritanic severity and intolerance, and one feels that the author is able to regard his subject with greater objectivity and impartiality. By 1840 his activity in the study of Goethe was already on the wane, as we have seen, and between 1840-45 there was little occasion for a quickened interest. Emerson had acquitted himself nobly in the Essay on Modern Literature, and having here reached certain personally satisfactory conclusions concerning the relative historical importance of Goethe's genius he was willing to pass on to new matter. But in 1841 appeared Carlyle's lectures on "Heroes and Hero-worship," parts of which Emerson was able to read in manuscript sent by the author. This work was doubt-



less an incentive to the "Representative Men," which was begun about 1845. Carlyle's "Heroes" presented Goethe in a new light, as the Man of Letters, placing emphasis upon the universal aspect. "Our chosen specimen of the Hero as Literary Man would be this Goethe. And it were a very pleasant plan for me here to discourse of his heroism; for I consider him to be a true Hero; heroic in what he said and did, and perhaps still more in what he did not say and did not do; to me a noble spectacle; a great heroic ancient man, speaking and keeping silence as an ancient Hero, in the guise of a most modern, high-bred, high-cultivated Man of Letters! We have had no such spectacle; no man capable of affording such, for the last hundred and fifty years." But Carlyle found it "worse than useless to attempt to speak of him in this case" at that time: "no impression but a false one could be realized. Him we must leave to future times." So he discoursed upon Johnson, Burns, and Rousseau—"Three men of the Eighteenth Century" who "did not conquer like him; they fought bravely and fell. They were not heroic bringers of the light, but heroic seekers of it." This hint of Carlyle's it may have been, that gave to Emerson a new light in which to approach Goethe, and led him to classify the German poet as representing the "powers and duties of the scholar or writer."

A consideration of Emerson's judgment of man or book brings us face to face with his critical method. This is in no way that of the painstaking and impartial scholar, bent upon thoughtful examination of fact after fact. With Emerson the personal element is always pronounced, as one would expect from such an extreme individualist. In the Journals, Oct 11, 1839, he writes: "We must learn to judge books by absolute standards. Criticism, too, must be transcendental. Society wishes to assign subjects and method to its writers. But neither it nor you may intermeddle. You cannot reason at will in this



and that other vein, but only as you must. . . . . we sing as we are bid." The critic, like the artist, must yield to the call of the Spirit and thus pronounce judgment in the light of the Ideal, the Moral-sentiment. Herein his standard is transcendental, impersonal, ethical, and alone justifiable. "Every scripture is to be interpreted by the same spirit which gave it forth"—is the fundamental law of criticism," writes Emerson in "Nature." (Wks. I, p. 35). To him all things are moral and in the Moral-sentiment all mankind is united in a huge, universal brotherhood, for every individual is a partaker of it. Thus are the greatest equally the wisest and the best, for they possess larger vision and clearer insight into those secret workings of reality which lie hidden behind and beyond the phenomena and the circumstance. "The high poetry of the world from the beginning has been ethical." (J. IV, p. 425), and later he writes: "I think the whole use in literature is moral. . . . . Morals differ from intellectuals in being instantly intelligible to all men." (J. VII, p. 250). It is the moral world, not the intellectual, then, which unites all men, and this is the basis for the criterion of criticism, whether of man, of book, or of thing. The greatest and best books are to Emerson those Bibles of the world, which "proceed out of the silent living mind to be heard again by the living mind" and are "given by the inspiration of God." "Every composition proceeds out of a greater or less depth of thought, and this is the measure of its effect. The highest class of books are those which express the moral element; the next, works of the imagination; and the next, works of science;—all dealing in realities,—what ought to be, what is, and what appears. These in proportion to the truth and beauty they involve, remain; the rest perish."

In the Essay on German Literature Carlyle had presented a German conception of the poet or literary man as exemplified in the writings of Schiller and particularly

of Fichte. This exalted conception of the Writer was restated in the "Heroes" and is fundamental to Emerson's criticism. Fichte in conformity with the Transcendental philosophy "calls the Man of Letters, therefore, a Prophet, or as he prefers to phrase it, a Priest, continually unfolding the God-like to men: Men of Letters are a perpetual Priesthood, from age to age, teaching all men that God is still present in their life; that all 'Appearance,' whatsoever we see in the world, is but as a vesture for the 'Divine Idea of the World' for that which lies at the bottom of Appearance!" It is in this sense that Carlyle would present Goethe, and with this larger perspective in view Emerson esteems him as the Writer or Secretary, the Reporter, the Scholar, at once "the man of the ages" and the man of his time. Carlyle would make no reservation in his eulogy, but in Emerson's approbation there is always a condition. Goethe, he feels, deserves rank with the greatest minds of all times—"The old Eternal Genius who built the world has confided himself more to this man than to any other." But he was too much of his own age to have ascended the highest summit and have known the greatest good.

To Emerson, Goethe and Napoleon were the two great exponents of the civilization of the 19th century, typical of its activity and tendency, the one in its inner, the other in its outer manifestations. They were the representative men of their age. Carlyle had thus designated them in his essay on Goethe's works. "Of great men in our time there have been Two; Napoleon, in the practical; Goethe, in the speculative province"—and the same attitude is expressed in his classification of Napoleon as 'Hero as King,' and Goethe as 'Hero as Man of Letters' in the "Heroes." Emerson too makes Goethe the representative Writer and Napoleon the representative Man-of-the-World, and writes: "I described Bonaparte as representative of the popular external life and aims of the 19th century. Its

other half, its poet, is Goethe, a man quite domesticated in the century, breathing its air, enjoying its fruits, impossible at an earlier time, and taking away, by his colossal parts, the reproach of weakness, which, but for him, would lie on the intellectual works of the period." Goethe was the great Mind, Napoleon the great Hand of the age (J. III, p. 148); both were "stern realists," representing "the impatience and reaction of nature against the morgue of conventions." They were the pivotal men of their time, for by their efforts the older civilization turned to the new. All before them were ancients. Both were peculiarly the products, as well as the leaders, of their age; in them its weakness and its strength, its vice and its virtue, were apparent.

The age that was passing—that is, their age—had been marked,<sup>51</sup> said Emerson, by an epochal revolution in life and thought. There had come about a democratization of society and of knowledge. The French Revolution and the Romantic philosophy were the outgrowth of that individual assertion which had characterized the time, and the conception of human brotherhood in the social state was but an outward manifestation of the union of all mankind in the Spirit, in the conception of an all-enveloping Over-Soul. In the material and in the intellectual aspects of life there was opportunity for every man. The age was one of great intellectual activity, a searching-out in every direction for more knowledge and for a clearer comprehension of facts, an attentive study of all phases of nature and life, and a bold and systematic criticism. It possessed all books and bred a multitude of writers drawn from every walk of life, and its result proved often a "wide superficial cultivation." "Christendom has become a great reading-room; and its books have the convenient merits of the newspaper, its eminent propriety, and its superficial exactness of information." To every man there was granted the privilege of acquainting

himself with the world's wisdom as expressed in the printed pages of its great books and in the living revelations of nature. Men were free to observe, to know, to think, and in their speculation there came "an insatiable demand for unity," and a "new consciousness of the one mind" which was omnipresent and discoverable in each of the manifold manifestations of sense.

The paramount characteristic of the age was its *subjectivity*. "The single soul feels its right to be no longer confounded with numbers, but itself to sit in judgment on history and literature, and to summon all facts and all parties before its tribunal." But there were two avenues open to the single soul; one of complete submission to the divinations of the Spirit within; the other of only partial submission, and thus selfish, private, personal, and dangerous. The former was commendable and alone of value, the latter Emerson termed "vicious subjectivity," unhealthy, unsound, and superficial. "The great man, even whilst he relates a private fact personal to him, is really leading us away from him to a universal experience. . . . to nature, and in our age to metaphysical nature, to the invisible awful facts, to moral abstractions, which are not less nature than is a river or a coal-mine, nay, they are far more nature—but its essence and soul."

Another trait of the modern mind, which was indeed but another aspect of the subjectivity of the age, was the feeling which it possessed of the *Infinite*. "A wild striving to express a more inward and infinite sense," says Emerson, "characterizes the works of every act. . . . This feeling of the Infinite has deeply colored the poetry of the period. This new love of the vast, always native in Germany, was imported into France by deStael, appeared in England in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Felicia Hemans, and finds a most genial climate in the American Mind." In fact what Emerson found as the most significant characteristics of the age were, as



we have noted, the most conspicuous traits of the Romantic revolt as expressed in the Transcendental philosophy. It was in the genius of the German people that this spirit had found best expression, by an activity which, "spreading from the poetic into the scientific, religious and philosophical domains," had made theirs the paramount intellectual influence of the world. Of the German genius in all its typical ramifications as of the modern mind Goethe was most representative. A man of immense culture and of various attainments, he was the one who united in himself all the tendencies of his age, a "poet, naturalist, and philosopher."

First of all Goethe was one who had gone "the circuit of human knowledge." His power of comprehension was all-engrossing. He was at home in the world. His "great sagacity and industry of observation" were nothing short of marvelous; he was the product of the earth as a reading-room. He knew all things and all things gave their contribution to his culture; he was versatile, at home in the ancient as in the modern civilization; the thinker, the unifier of the multiplicity, of the "miscellany of facts" of experience. "He seems to see out of every pore of his skin." He was not afraid to live, bravely, generously, cheerfully. His was a manly mind, sincere and genuine, subtle and alert and far-seeing, ever self-reliant and without fear. He was the "soul of his century," for he clothed modern existence with poetry, and in every realm of experience "he detected the Genius of life." "He writes in the plainest and lowest tone, omitting a great deal more than he writes, and putting ever a thing for a word."<sup>52</sup> As a student of nature he gave utterance to the "best things about Nature that ever were said," and as a scientist his activities extended into the fields of botany, zoology, osteology, optics. "A resolute realist," he was, and "the King of Scholars." "He is the high-priest of the age. He is the truest of all writers. His



books are all records of what has been lived, and his sentences and words seem to see." One born to observe and to write, a Namer and Sayer, he came destined and endowed by nature for the fulfillment of his great task. He loved the truth and was incessantly active in an "endless variety of studies with uniform cheerfulness and greatness of mind," lifting the veil from every object to marvel and to wonder. "Since Shakespeare, there has been no mind of equal compass to his. There is the wise man. He has the largest range of thought, the most catholic mind; a person who has spoke in every science, and has added to the scientific lore of other students, and who represents better than any other individual the progressive mind of the present age. He is the oracle of all the leading students in every nation at this time."<sup>52</sup>

Again, in complete accord with the spirit of his age Goethe shared in its subjectivity. "He felt his entire right and duty to stand before and try and judge every fact in nature. He thought it necessary to dot round with his pen the entire sphere of knowables; and for many of his stories, this seems the only reason. Here is a piece of humanity I had hitherto omitted to sketch—take this." Everything was subjected to his subtle inquiry, and nothing escaped his searching glance. Nor was he satisfied with the surface, but pried always for a reason, an explanation of the fact. "Hence a certain greatness encircles every fact he treats; for to him it has a soul, an eternal reason why it was so, and not otherwise. This is the secret of that deep realism, which went about among all objects he beheld, to find the cause why they must be what they are." And his favorite task was to find a theory of every institution, custom, art, work of art, which he observed. Like all great minds he gave ever a thing, not a word. From him nothing was hid. "He will realize what you say. He hates to be trifled with, and to be made to say over again some old wife's fable,

that has had possession of men's faith these thousand years. He may as well see if it is true as another. He sifts it—I am here, he would say, to be the measure and judge of these things. Why should I take them on trust?" He trusted always in himself, in the assertion of his own genius, and in his search of the Truth, in the final synthesis, his aim was always for fundamentals and eternal. By the door of the finite he approached the infinite, and in this he was a richer partaker than any other in the commendable subjectivism of his age.

His mind like that of his countrymen was introverted. "What distinguishes Goethe for French and English readers is a property which he shares with his nation—a habitual reference to interior truth." In England and America there is a respect for and satisfaction in talent, especially if it is worthily exerted. But Goethe, "the head and body of the German nation, does not speak from talent, but the truth shines through: he is very wise, though his talent often veils his wisdom. . . . he has the formidable independence which converse with truth gives: hear you, or forbear, his fact abides; and your interest in the writer is not confined to his story, and he dismissed from memory, when he has performed his task creditably, as a baker when he has left his loaf; but his work is the least part of him." It is not the man and his poem or story, but his wisdom, the glimpses of truth, the feeling of the infinite that one gets from reading his books, that place him among the great minds of all time and distinguish him as the master-mind of modern times.

But, said Emerson in impeachment of Goethe, though there was embodied in him the glory and power of the modern mind, he was also tainted by its moral defects and shortcomings. He too was infected by the "vicious subjectivism" of his time. He strove to know, that he himself might benefit. "His is not even devotion to pure truth; but to truth for the sake of culture. He has aims

no less large than the conquest of universal nature, of universal truth; to be his portion: a man not to be bribed, nor deceived, nor overawed; of a stoical self-command and self-denial and having one test for all men—what can you teach me? All possessions are valued by him for that only; rank, privileges, health, time, being itself." He typified culture, self-culture. He desired all things to converge to himself as a centre. He stood forth, statuesque, with "Olympian self-complacency, the patronising air with which he vouchsafes to tolerate the genius and performances of other mortals." Enemies he had and friends, but such enmity or friendship was to him only a means of enlarging his own wealth of experience and knowledge. He was a colossal egoist. "The daemons sat to him, and the saint who saw the daemons; and the metaphysical elements took form. 'Piety itself is no aim, but only a means, whereby, through purest inward peace, we may attain to highest culture.'" As a man of genius he dwelt alone and "like the mountains pays the tax of snows and silence for elevation." (J. IV. p. 201).

The law of compensation here too played its role; "there is always a price." For, says Emerson, "This subtle element of egotism in Goethe certainly does not seem to deform his compositions, but to lower the moral influence of the man. He differs from all the great in the total want of frankness. Whoso saw Milton, whoso saw Shakespeare, saw these do their best, and utter their whole heart manlike among their brethren. No man was permitted to call Goethe brother. He hid himself, and worked always to astonish, which is egotism, and therefore little." Thus Goethe, like Napoleon, fell short of the highest flight of genius. Napoleon fell, said Carlyle, when he changed from Democrat to Aristocrat, when "he apostatised from his old Faith in facts" and took to believing in semblances. And so too in the light of the

ethical ideal Emerson pronounces judgment. "Here was an experiment, under the most favorable conditions, of the powers of intellect with conscience" . . . . . "He did all that in him lay, to live and thrive without moral principle. It was the nature of things, the eternal law of man and of the world, which balked and ruined him, and the result, in a million experiments, will be the same. Every experiment, by multitudes or by individuals, that has a sensual and selfish aim, will fail. . . . . Only that good profits, which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men." Both of the typical figures of the democratic tendencies of the 19th century were destined to failure as men of moral force and influence. In both a selfish egoism was the source of their undoing, and as a result character suffered. Neither worshipped the highest unity; neither was capable of self-surrender to the Moral-sentiment; neither can ever be dear to men. Yet both were men of indefatigable industry and marvelous achievement. "There are nobler strains in poetry than he has sounded," said Emerson of Goethe. "There are writers poorer in talent, whose tone is purer, and more touches the heart." As a man who wished to make the most of himself, he thought, Goethe was right in avoiding the strains and pains and horrors of life (J. VIII, p. 70), but the error lay in this, that he should have desired to do neither. "That Goethe had not a moral perception proportionate to his other powers, is not then merely a circumstance, as we might relate of a man that he had or had not the sense of time or an eye for colors, but it is the cardinal fact of health or disease; since, lacking this, he failed in the high sense to be a creator, and with divine endowments, drops by irreversible decree into the common history of genius."

It is from this vantage-ground that Emerson directs his attack. For the genius of Goethe, his industry and versatility, his accomplishment and resourcefulness, he



has always words of praise; but for the Olympian, the egoist, the exponent of culture for the sake of culture, he finds only words of censure, at times cruel and stinging, without mercy and full of wrath. In the Journals and letters to Carlyle (1834-40), this attitude is stated fearlessly, whereas in the public essays and lectures, as already mentioned, it has been to a considerable extent deprived of its sting. Against this Goethe, wherever evident, whether in works or life, his bitterness is inexorable. He finds it hard to reconcile the great genius of the man with his way of life, and with the stubborn independence of the democratic American he condemns the courtier and friend of princes. "I cannot read of the jubilee of Goethe, and of such a velvet life, without a sense of incongruity. Genius is out of place when it reposes fifty years on chairs of state, and inhales a continual incense of adulation. Its proper ornaments and relief are poverty and reproach and danger, and if the Grand Duke had cut Goethe's head off, it would have been much better for his fame than retiring to his rooms, after dismissing the obsequious crowds, to arrange tastefully and contemplate their gifts and honorary inscriptions." (J III, p. 251). And again a few days later he notes (Jan., 1834): "Are not his (Michael Angelo's) struggles and mortifications a more beautiful wreath than the milliners made for Goethe?" While reading the "Tag-und-Jahres Hefte" in June, 1834, he makes the following statements in the Journal: "The problem is, How shall this soul called Goethe be educated? And whatever he does or whatever befalls him is viewed solely in relation to its effect upon the development of his mind. Even in the arms of his mistress at Rome he says he studied sculpture and poetry. To husband our admiration is an intellectual temperance indispensable to health. But Goethe was a person who hated words that did not stand for things, and had a sympathy with everything that existed, and



therefore never writes without saying something. He will be artist and look at God and man, and the Future and the infinite, as a self-possessed spectator, who believed that what he saw he could delineate. Herder questioned whether a man thus had the right to affect the god, instead of working with all his heart in his place. Self-cultivation is yet the moral of all that Goethe has writ, and in indolence, intolerance and perversion I think we can spare an olive and a laurel for him. No man has drawn his materials of fiction from so wide a circuit. Very properly he introduces into the machinery of his romance whatever feeling or impulse the most rapt enthusiast has trusted in. Coincidences, dreams, omen, spiritual impressions, and a habitual religious faith—all these are materials which, as a wise artist, he avails himself of. . . . Nevertheless there is a difference between thought and thought, and it is as real a defect in a man not to perceive the right of his moral sentiments to his allegiance, as it is not to be conscious of moral sentiments. Yet Goethe, with all his fine things about 'Entsagen,' can write and print too like Rochester and Beranger." (J. III, p. 310).

Emerson here states his grounds for criticism. All-sidedness to him is no excuse for an Epicurean mode of life. "To praise a man for such quality is like praising an observatory for being very low and massive, and a very good fort. It is not more the office of man to receive all impressions, than it is to distinguish sharply between them." (J. III, p. 313). In 1835 (May 13) he notes: "Who is capable of a manly friendship? . . . . We feel an interest in a robust healthful mind, an Alfred, Chaucer, Dante, which Goethe never inspires." (J. III, p. 477). And in 1836 (April 26): "On the whole, what have these German Weimarish art-friends done? They have rejected all the traditions and conventions, have sought to come thereby one step nearer to absolute truth.

But they still are no nearer than others. I do not draw from them great influence. The heroic, the holy, I lack. They are contemptuous. They fail in sympathy with humanity. The voice of nature they bring me to hear is not divine but ghastly, hard and ironical. They do not illuminate me: they do not edify me. Plutarch's heroes cheer, exalt. . . . . The roots of what is great and high must still be in the common life." (J. IV, p. 212 ff.). And feeling this imperfection keenly Emerson could write: "But much I fear that Time, the serene judge, will not be able to make out so good a verdict for Goethe as did and doth Carlyle. I am afraid that under his faith is no-faith, that under his love is love-of-ease. However, his muse is catholic as ever any was." (J. IV, p. 23 ff.).

In the letter to Carlyle of Nov. 20, 1834, Emerson also freely states his dislike of Goethe the Man:—"Then the Puritan in me accepts no apology for bad morals in such as he. We can tolerate vice in a splendid nature whilst that nature is battling with the brute majority in defense of some human principle. The sympathy his manhood and his misfortunes call out adopts even his faults; but genius, pampered, acknowledged, crowned, can only retain our sympathy by turning the same force expended against outward enemies now against inward, and carrying forward and planting the standard of Orasmasdes so many leagues farther on into the envious Dark. Failing this, it loses its nature and becomes talent, according to the definition—more skill in attaining vulgar ends. A certain wonderful friend of mine said that "a false priest is the falsest of false things." But what makes the priest? A cassock? O Diogenes! Or the power (and hence the call) to teach man's duties as they flow from the Superhuman? Is not he who perceives and proclaims the Superhumanities, he who has once intelligently pronounced the words "Self-renunciation," "In-

visible Leader," "Heavenly Powers of Sorrow," and so on, forever the liege of the same?.....Then to write luxuriously is not the same as to live so, but a new and worse offence. It implies an intellectual defect also, the perceiving that the present corrupt condition of human nature (which condition this harlot muse helps to perpetuate) is a temporary and superficial state."<sup>54</sup>

It is to be remembered that these extremely bitter statements were made while Emerson was reading Goethe, before the appearance of Menzel and before the writing of the *Essays*. They reflect on the whole the attitude of puritan New England, which we have found to have been respectful of Goethe as a sage but hostile to Goethe as a man and artist. That Emerson was at first considerably influenced by the current anti-Goethe sentiment in the community is here evident, although we know that he gradually attained a position of greater tolerance. However, much of this misunderstanding and prejudice always clung to him. The Goethe of the "vicious egoism" and "velvet life," the man-of-the-world and the courtier, the aristocrat, and, above all, Goethe the lover, are the butts of Emerson's attack. That Goethe's various love-affairs, and his frankness of confession in regard to them, were offensive to the puritanic conscience and did much to bring down upon himself the wrath and contempt of the moralists, is quite obvious. Especially severe were they in their condemnation of his relation to Friederike Brion, and with a superior disdain they cast questioning glances at the stories of his relations to Frau von Stein and Christiane Vulpius. In this regard all New England almost was united against him and his detractors found their strongest and most telling weapon. Writing to Carlyle in 1839 (March 19) Emerson says: "To me, a profane man, it was good sport to see the Olympic lover of FredERICA, Lili, etc., lampooned," and, we remember, Margaret

Fuller made the break with Lili the critical moment of Goethe's career.

Goethe knew too much of himself, said Emerson, and there was too much of the personal and private in his work; he dwelt too much in the world of sense and too little in that of the Spirit. He lacked the sublime vision. Things and thoughts existed for his benefit rather than he for theirs. And this underlying vice conditioned the "worldly tone of his tales." "It was the infirmity of an admirable scholar, who loved the world out of gratitude: who knew where libraries, galleries, architecture, laboratories, savans and leisure, were to be had, and who did not quite trust the compensations of poverty and nakedness." It was this that made him think "dealing habitually with men and affairs essential to the health" (J. VII, p. 77), that made him "the amateur of all arts, and sciences, and events; artistic but not artist, spiritual but not spiritualistic,"<sup>55</sup> poetic but not a poet. His genius was so great that it just escaped being among the very greatest, and the pity lies in this that he might have been more. "The criticism, which is not so much spoken as felt in reference to Goethe," wrote Emerson, "instructs us directly in the hope of literature. We feel that a man gifted like him should not leave the world as he found it. It is true, though somewhat sad, that every fine genius teaches us how to blame himself. Being so much, we cannot forgive him for not being more. When one of these grand monads is incarnated whom nature seems to design for eternal men and draw to her bosom, we think that the old weariness of Europe and Asia, the trivial forms of daily life will now end, and a new morning break on us all. What is Austria? What is England? What is our graduated and petrified social scale of ranks and employments? Shall not a poet redeem us from these idolatries, and pale their legendary lustre before the fires of the Divine Wisdom which burn in his heart? All



that in our sovereign moments each of us has divined of the powers of thought, all the hints of omnipresence and energy, which we have caught, this man should unfold, and constitute facts."

How did Goethe answer to this call? How is the world better for his presence? "What load has he lifted from men and women?" He was at home in the world and among the actualities of life. "None was so fit to live, or more heartily enjoyed the game." But he was too content to "spend on common aims his splendid endowments, and has declined the office proffered to now and then a man in many centuries in the power of his genius, of a Redeemer of the human mind.....Life for him is prettier, easier, wiser, decenter, has a gem or two more on its robe, but its old eternal burden is not relieved; no drop of healthier blood flows yet in its veins. Let him pass. Humanity must wait for its physician still at the side of the road, and confess as this man goes out, that they have served it better who assured it out of the innocent hope in their hearts that a Physician will come, than this majestic Artist, with all the treasures of wit, of science, and of power at his command."

But Emerson was not entirely without forbearance in his criticism. He knew that there was "no man without his foible," and he always wished to give Goethe his due. He admired above all Goethe's exquisite poise and self-command, his easy trust in himself. Much of the wanton and prejudiced criticism of him was as abhorrent to Emerson as was the bland and confident praise. Of Margaret Fuller he said: "She had that symptom which appears in all students of Goethe,—an ill-dissembled contempt of all criticism on him which they hear from others, as if it were totally irrelevant; and they are themselves always preparing to say the right word,—a prestige which is allowed, of course, until they do speak; when they have delivered their volley, they pass, like their fore-



goers, to the rear."<sup>56</sup> Emerson, like others, was conscious of and understood Goethe's shortcomings, but did not believe in excusing them or apologising for them, nor did he believe in dwelling on them. He felt Goethe's name to be one so firmly and irretrievably established that it "could neither be talked up nor down." (J. VII, p. 474). Thus, he notes in his Journal in October, 1844: "P. pleased the Boston people by railing at Goethe in his  $\Phi$  B. K. oration, because Goethe was not a New England Calvinist. If our lovers of greatness and goodness after a local type and standard could expand their scope a little, they would see that a worshiper of truth like Goethe, with his impatience of all falsehood and scorn of hypocrisy (did he manifest his love of truth and scorn of falsehood to the women whose hearts he broke?) was a far more useful man and incomparably more helpful ally to religion than 10,000 luke-warm church-members who keep all the traditions and leave a tithe of their estates to establish them. But this clergyman should have known that the movement which in America created these Unitarian dissenters, of which he is one, began in the mind of this great man he traduces; that he is precisely the individual in which the new ideas appeared and opened to their greatest extent and with universal application, which more recently the active scholars in the different departments of science, of state, and of the church have carried in parcels and thimblefuls to their petty occasions." (J. VI, p. 544).

Goethe's great labors, his industry, and versatility, were in Emerson's opinion worthy of emulation and of esteem. The critic should deal with the living work. The man's achievement, what he was, not what he failed to be or to do, should occupy men's minds. This is his meaning in the lines "to J. W.," which were addressed evidently to the Rev. John Weiss, who seems to have dwelt

too much on Goethe's failings. (Wks. IX, p. 29 and 414), and are the expression of a man of tolerance and sympathy, not of unfriendliness and criticism.

"Set not thy foot on graves;  
Nor seek to unwind the shroud  
Which charitable Time  
And Nature have allowed  
To wrap the errors of a sage sublime.

"Set not thy foot on graves;  
Care not to strip the dead  
Of his sad ornament,  
His myrrh, and wine, and rings.

"His sheet of lead,  
And trophies buried;  
Go get them where he got them when alive;  
As resolutely dig or dive.

"Life is too short to waste  
In critic peep or cynic bark,  
Quarrel or reprimand:  
'Twill soon be dark;  
Up! mind thine own aim, and  
God speed the mark!"

Emerson found in Goethe "poet, naturalist, and philosopher," all in one. His was a mind which sought to find unity in variety by a study of variety, the infinite in the finite by a study of the finite. His method was essentially that of the scientist; his love of truth that of the philosopher; and his manner of expression that of the poet. Nature revealed her secret to him as to no other contemporary, and herein lay his great power of appeal to humanity. "When Goethe says, Nature, love, truth, insight, it is quite another thing than if some one else used those words." (J. 1856). "He treats nature as the old philosophers, as the seven wise masters did—and, with whatever loss of French tabulation and dissection, poetry and humanity remain to us; and they have some doctoral

skill. Eyes are better, on the whole, than telescopes or microscopes. He has contributed a key to many parts of nature, through the rare turn for unity and simplicity in his mind." Goethe was great as a naturalist because with this faculty he united the imaginative insight of the poet: thus "his love of Nature has seemed to give new meaning to that word."

His method of study and bent of mind have made him also a lawgiver in the realm of art. "He has defined art, its scope and laws," but though artistic, was not an artist in the loftiest sense of the term. Margaret Fuller said of him that he had the artist's hand, but not the artist's love of structure. Emerson also felt something of this. "Was it that he knew too much that his sense was microscopic, and interfered with the just perspective, the seeing of the whole? He is fragmentary; a writer of occasional poems, and of an encyclopaedia of sentences. When he sits down to write a drama or a tale, he collects and sorts his observations from a hundred sides, and combines them into the body as fitly as he can. A great deal refuses to incorporate; this he adds loosely, as letters of parties, leaves from their journals, or the like. A great deal is still left that will not find any place. This the bookbinder alone can give any cohesion to: and hence, notwithstanding the looseness of many of his works, we have volumes of detached paragraphs, aphorisms, xenien, etc., etc."<sup>57</sup> In this criticism, Emerson shows his own predilection for Goethe's aphoristic writings.

Nor does Emerson concede to Goethe the highest honors of poetic genius; in his praise there is always a reserve, spoken or unspoken. As a man, his great misfortune was that he might have been greater, a fact which according to Emerson was also his serious limitation as a poet. "He is a poet—poet of a prouder laurel than any contemporary, and, under this plague of microscopes

.....strikes the harp with a hero's strength and grace." But his was never the loftiest flight of the muse. The poet, said Emerson, is one destined to express and interpret through the medium of art and by dint of his creative imagination the mysteries of life, "where Being passes into Appearance, and Unity into Variety." His spirit must be cheerful, free, liberating, all-embracing, unselfish. He is the Namer, or language-maker, the man of deeper insight, the man of ecstasy, of abandonment to the Spirit; he has a "new thought, a new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be richer in his fortune. The experience of each new age requires a new confession and the world seems always waiting for its poet." In this regard, the poet's is "a heart in unison with his time and country." He is the Man of Beauty, the "complete-man," that one "without impediment who sees and handles that which others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart." But the great poet must be all this and more, for there is "a great difference between good poetry and everlasting poetry." (J. II, p. 232). That art is cant and pedantry, he said, which does not make the "poor and uncultivated feel that it addresses them also and brings with it the oracle of conscience." (J. V, p. 88). "Poetry must be affirmative and idealistic. It is the piety of the intellect." Its success is attained, not when it lulls and satisfies, but when it astonishes and fires with enthusiasm and with new endeavors after the unattainable. "Only that is poetry which cleanses and mans me." Its supreme value is to educate to a height beyond itself, and thus subdue mankind to order and virtue. Its aim is moral. Great poetry is transcendental, and the "inexorable rule in the muse's court—either inspiration or silence—compels the bard to report only his supreme moments. Much that we call poetry is only polite

verse. Yet even partial ascents to poetry and ideas are forerunners and announce the dawn." The great poet was the one who surrendered himself entirely to the inspiration of the Moral-ideal and spoke forth its truths to man. "The great poets are judged by the frame of mind which they induce; and to them, of all men, the severest criticism is due," he wrote in the preface to "Parnassus." They could not but be moral and devoid of egoism. They must be Prophet-poets; in the words of Carlyle, revealers of what we are to do and of what we are to love. Such a one was Milton, who stood erect, commanding, a man among men, and read the laws of the Moral-sentiment to the new-born race. (Wks. XII. p. 253). Such a one too, was Michael Angelo, whom Emerson characterized as a "brother and friend to all who acknowledge the beauty that beams in universal nature, and who seek by labor and self-denial to approach its source in perfect goodness." (Wks. XII. p. 244). And such a one too, if we may digress for a moment, was Emerson himself, whose poems "lift the reader into a higher region of thought and feeling."<sup>58</sup> But not such a one, in his opinion, was Goethe.<sup>59</sup>

He was rather the supreme exponent of modern poetry which, Emerson said, had become egoistic. (J. II. p. 232). He was too self-conscious, and stands preeminently as the scholar. "For, the scholar is the student of the world, and of what worth the world is, and with what emphasis it accosts the soul of man, such is the worth, such the call of the scholar." (Wks. I, p. 157). His aim was to "paint the Actual as, after years of dreams, it will still appear and reappear to wise men." He would be a "resolute realist" among men and things. He possessed all the qualifications of the great poet, except the cardinal virtue, the divine gift, of self-surrender to the Moral-sentiment. He failed to see that the Ideal was truer than the Actual. He "must be set down as the poet of the Actual, not



of the Ideal; the poet of limitation, not of possibility. of the world, and not of religion and hope; in short, if we may say so, the poet of prose, and not of poetry. He accepts the base doctrine of Fate, and gleans what straggling joys may yet remain out of its ban. He is like a banker or a weaver with a passion for the country; he steals out of the hot streets before sunrise, or after sunset, on a rare holiday, to get a draft of sweet air and a gaze at the magnificence of summer, but dares not break from his slavery and lead a man's life in a man's relation to nature. In that which should be his own place, he feels like a truant, and is scourged back presently to his task and his cell. Poetry is with Goethe thus external, the gilding of the chain, the mitigation of his fate; but the Muse never assays those thunder-tones which cause to vibrate the sun and the moon, which dissipate by dreadful melody all this iron net-work of circumstance, and abolish the old heavens and the old earth before the freewill or Godhead of man."

It is interesting to note, however, that Emerson's admiration and respect for Goethe's genius and power as a poet-philosopher led him to include him among his choice of the five greatest bards of all time. Five, says the Muse, were able to withstand the storms of Time, and they were Homer, Dante, Swedenborg, Shakespeare, and Goethe.

"I hung my verses in the wind,  
Time and tide their faults may find.  
All were winnowed through and through,  
Five lines lasted sound and true.".....

Most readers today are doubtless much surprised to find Swedenborg among these, but we must remember that the Swedish mystic was one of Emerson's favorite writers and that he also found place for him among his Representative Men. He was cognizant of an "entire want

of poetry" in him, and thought sometimes that for this reason "he will not be read longer," but he was struck and held by the fact that "in his eye the eternal flux of things goes always on, there is no material kernel, only spiritual center" (J. VI, p. 183), and therefore he was a "right poet." Shakespeare, the "best" of poets, was also found wanting by this lofty idealist and for much the same reasons as Goethe. At the end of the essay on Shakespeare we find the following words: "It must be conceded that these are half-views of half-men. The world still wants its poet-priest, a reconciler, who shall not trifle with Shakespeare the player, nor shall grope in graves with Swedenborg the mourner; but who shall see, speak, and act, with equal inspiration. For knowledge will brighten the sunshine; right is more beautiful than private affection; and love is compatible with universal wisdom."

In the verse on Goethe in the "Solution" the characterization is brief and in the main like that in essays. Though sincere as a poet, his are never the great felicities, the miracles of poetry: he is rather the scholar, the bringer of wisdom, the "all-knowing poet" of modern times.

"In newer days of war and trade,  
Romance forgot, and faith decayed,  
When Science armed and guided war,  
And clerks the Janus-gates unbar,  
When France, where poet never grew,  
Halved and dealt the globe anew,  
Goethe, raised o'er joy and strife,  
Drew the firm lines of Fate and life  
And brought Olympian wisdom down  
To court and mart, to gown and town.  
Stooping, his finger wrote in clay  
The open secret of today."

Goethe was always one of Emerson's great names, one of the master-minds, the authorities to whom he looked for aid and confirmation in his own efforts. For

Goethe had something to say on every subject worthy of thought; he possessed an eye for the measure of all things, and amongst his "multitudes of opinions" there were comparatively but "few blunders." He was one who moved "our wonder at the mystery of our life," and his opinions were of greater weight than those of any other. "It is to me very plain that no genius can work with equal effect upon mankind as Goethe, for no intelligent young man can read him without finding that his own compositions are immediately modified by his new knowledge." (J. IV, p. 218). In the tabulation of references which Dr. Holmes made from Emerson's works, we find Goethe occupying fifth place with 62 quotations to his credit, outnumbered only by Shakespeare with 112, Napoleon with 84, Plato with 81, and Plutarch with 70. Goethe's versatility and perspicacity of intellect were a source of continual wonder to him. "Anything that Goethe said, another might attain to say; but the profusion of sayings, everyone of which is good and striking—no man. In these days we rather incline to sniff at men of talent, and at achievements as if the artist cost too much: but when a man can do so many things, when achievement amounts to such a prodigious sum, it grows respectable." (J. VII, p. 176). And Emerson's quotations from Goethe, which he scattered throughout his written product rest upon this basis, that here was one who had something to say to men which he could commend as of value and authority, for always, says Dr. Holmes, "Emerson quotes to illustrate some original thought of his own, or because another writer's way of thinking falls in with his own,—never with a trivial purpose."<sup>60</sup> The quotations are always introduced to elucidate his meaning or drive home his thought. Thus we find them drawn from every field of interest to emphasize laws of art and of moral conduct, laws of nature and of the mind, spiritual and practical counsel, and

whatever may shed more light upon the secrets of Being and give man fuller comprehension of the meaning of human responsibility.

Emerson was too pronounced an individualist to accept Goethe's word unconditionally. Books were his servants, not his masters: his only real authorities were nature and life. He valued Goethe as he valued Plato or Swedenborg, as one whose aim it was to read anew for mankind the old riddle of life in its remoter symbols, to confront the sphinx fearlessly and with perfect equanimity. "I have been reading him these two or three days, and I think him far more lucky than most of his contemporaries at this game. There he sits at the centre of all visibles and knowables, blowing bubble after bubble, so transparent, so round, so coloured that he thinks and you think, they are pretty good miniatures of the All." (J. IV, p. 23 ff.). Now, this too was Emerson's all-absorbing interest, and hence he was able to find in Goethe many a helpful and illuminating thought and welcomed him as one to whom he could turn with comfort and profit. "In Goethe is that sincerity which makes the value of literature and that one voice or one writer who wrote all the good books." (J. 1843). Thus it was a pleasure to find in Goethe many a humbly cherished thought and to read there, as he himself put it, "a comment and consent" to his own speculation. "Goethe with his extraordinary breadth of experience and culture, the security with which, like a great continental gentleman, he looks impartially over all literatures of the mountains, the provinces, and the sea, and avails himself of the best in all, contrasts with the rigor of the English, and the superciliousness and flippancy of the French. This perfect taste, the austere felicities of his style. It is delightful to find our own thought in so great a man." (J. VI, p. 514).

Thus it would be inexpedient to attempt to trace any direct influence of the one man upon the other. That Emerson did derive much from the perusal of Goethe's writings, that he was indebted to him for many a happy inspiration and turn of phrase, and that he wisely accepted many a word of counsel and admonition, no one can well deny; but it must be remembered that such influence was at any case general and largely unconscious. Emerson went to his library not to find his thought, but rather to assure himself of its validity or inadequacy. As Woodberry has aptly put it: "one follows him into the books he read, not for the sources of his thought, but for the mould of the man himself." Upon whatever he has left there is the indelible Emersonian stamp.

It was chiefly in his scientific and aesthetic interests that Goethe gave him larger and more positive information. Indeed Goethe's scientific studies were to him, in the words of his son Edward W. Emerson, "a bridge" to the reading and understanding of the works of the leading scientists of the time.<sup>61</sup> In the artistic realm the tendency was to soften the sterner prejudices which had been an inheritance of the old Calvinistic strain and to bring about a more sympathetic and tolerant spirit. "Goethe unlocks the faculties of the artist more than any writer. He teaches us to treat all subjects with greater freedom, and to skip over all obstruction, time, place, name, usage, and come full and strong on the emphasis of the fact." (J. V, p. 222). And earlier in 1833 he wrote: "Goethe laughs at those who force every work of art into the narrow circle of his own prejudices and cannot admire a picture as a picture and a tune as a tune. So I was willing to look at this ballet, as a ballet, and see that it was admirable, but I could not help feeling the while that it were better for mankind if there were no such dancers." (J. III, p. 113). Such an attempt to take up a position of greater impartiality and objectivity



of judgment, to attain a wider tolerance, reflects at once his sincerity and respect for the wide culture of the German poet and the obdurate puritanic stringency of his own nature.

But it was doubtless Goethe's untiring energy and devotion to Truth, the example of endless activity and labor which his works furnished, that was of most value to Emerson and gave him greatest inspiration. It was precisely this aspect that Carlyle so forcefully emphasized. For Goethe was one who brought literature back to its ancient might and dignity. His work seemed herculean and yet he performed it cheerfully, courageously, with steadfastness and perfect self-reliance. "This cheerful labourer, with no external popularity or provocation, drawing his motive and his plan from his own breast, tasked himself with stunts for a giant, and, without relaxation or rest, except by alternating his pursuits, worked on for eighty years with the steadfastness of his first zeal." By this immense productivity Emerson was inspired with courage and a feeling of the "equivalence of all times" and a new faith in the glory of the present and the future. "The world is young; the former great men call to us affectionately. We too must write Bibles, to unite again the heavens and the earthly world. The secret of genius is to suffer no fiction to exist for us; to realize all that we know; in the high refinement of modern life, in arts, in sciences, in books, in men, to exact good faith, reality, and a purpose; and first, last, midst, and without end, to honor every truth by use."

### III—3. THE INDIVIDUAL WORKS.

An examination of Emerson's written criticisms of Goethe's individual works presents concrete instances of the general attitude as outlined above. The same virtues and vices are emphasized which made him at the same time prize and reject the poet, the scholar, and the man.

His opinions are to be found here and there in the Journals, the Essays, and the Correspondence, and also in conversations and lectures as reported and preserved by friends and acquaintances. Among them, his views on the "Meister" and the "Faust" are most illuminating and characteristic, though all help better to focus the salient points of his critical attitude. He found the spirit of all of Goethe's works, "of his biography, of his poems, of his tales," identical, and admired his self-reliant manner and proud disinclination to offer explanation of his thought, his artistic reserve, and firm faith "that the intelligent reader would come at last, and would thank them."

We have observed that Emerson was most appreciative of the "wisdom" of Goethe. It was to pluck the fruits of this master-mind that he pursued his long and arduous reading of the great German's writings. What he valued most in a book was not its literary merit, but always its depth of thought, its sincerity and philosophical insight, and its knowledge of facts and of life. He cared but little for its artistic beauty or stylistic mastery, but looked to the content, prizing the idealistic and rejecting the utilitarian. He was in no way a literary critic. His three practical rules of reading were:— (1) "Never read any book that is not a year old." (2) "Never read any but famed books." (3) "Never read any but what you like." (Wks. VII, p. 196). He never was an ardent reader of fiction or paid much heed to the lighter branches of literature. As early as 1826, we find the following entry in the Journals: "..... Let the fictions of chivalry alone. Fictions, whether of the theorist or poet, have their value as ornaments, but when they intrude into the place of facts, they do infinite injury, inasmuch as it is only by the perception and comparison of Truth that we can perceive and enjoy the harmonies of the system of

human destinies which the Deity is accomplishing from age to age."

He admired Goethe's "Sprüche," and in later years was accustomed to carry them along upon his travels; we find him reading them on his California trip,<sup>62</sup> and also later upon the Nile (1873).<sup>63</sup> Those maxims and rules of life which were originally written at various times and were later gathered and issued in one volume he considered "one of the most important we possess."<sup>64</sup> He was fond of the "Italian Journey," and the "Tag-und-Jahres Hefte," because of the great knowledge of life and comment thereon which they contained. He did not like the "Dichtung und Wahrheit," thinking that Goethe knew "altogether too much about himself" (J. VII, p. 303), and failing to find the work really fulfilling his requirements of an autobiography—"An autobiography should be a book of answers from one individual to the many questions of the time." (J. VII, p. 264). "The book affords slender materials for what would be reckoned with us a "life of Goethe,"—a few dates; no correspondence; no details of offices or employments; no light on his marriage; and, a period of ten years, that should be the most active in his life, after his settlement at Weimar, is sunk in silence. Meantime, certain love-affairs, that came to nothing, as people say, have the strangest importance: he crowds us with details:—certain whimsical opinions, cosmogonies, and religions of his own invention, and, especially his relations to remarkable minds, and to critical epochs of thought:—these he magnifies. His "Daily and Yearly Journal," his "Italian Travels," his "Campaign in France," and the historical part of his "Theory of Colours," have the same interest." Emerson finds too much of Goethe the egoist in his autobiographical work: the great events and problems of the day are mentioned and of interest, he thinks, only in so far as they have bearing upon the cultural development

of the individual, Goethe. It is not a "true Conversation's Lexicon for earnest men."

Of "dramatic power, the rarest in literature, he has very little," writes Emerson of Goethe. Yet he finds words of admiration for the "Tasso," which he probably read only in Margaret Fuller's translation,<sup>65</sup> and which he characterizes as a play, the crisis of which, as in life, grows "out of the faults and the conditions of the parties" (J. VI, p. 238), and in another place he writes:—"Goethe's Tasso is very likely to be a pretty fair historical portrait, and that is true tragedy. It does not seem to me so genuine when some tyrannous Richard III oppresses and slays a score of innocent persons, as when Antonio and Tasso, both apparently right, wrong each other. One living after the maxims of this world, and consistent and true to them; the other fired with all divine sentiments, yet grasping also at the pleasures of sense, without submitting to their law. That is a grief we all feel, a knot we cannot untie. Tasso's is no infrequent case in modern biography. A man of genius, of an ardent temperament, reckless of physical laws, self-indulgent, becomes presently unfortunate, querulous, a 'discomfortable cousin,' a thorn to himself and to others." (Wks. II, p. 232). Emerson seems, indeed, to have appreciated most sympathetically the temperamental antimony of the conflict of the drama.

The "Iphigenie" was to him "a pleasing, moving, even heroic work," but its greatest weakness lay in that it was an "imitation of the antique," a modern-antique—Carlyle uses the same term in his "Helena" Essay—"like Landor's 'Pericles' or Wieland's 'Abderites' or Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' or Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel'." These were in his estimation "paste-jewels," not genuine; and he asked:—"How can a great genius endure to make paste-jewels?" (J. VI, p. 400; IV, p. 34). Emerson evidently missed the deeper, spiritual element which dis-



tinguishes this work from its Greek predecessors, and which Felton, as we have noted, pointed out in his review. He seems to have preferred the Ancients. Margaret Fuller with truer artistic sympathy termed it "a work beyond the possibility of negation; a work where a religious meaning not only pierces but enfolds the whole."<sup>66</sup>

Of all Goethe's works that which was most misunderstood and subjected to the most abusive criticism was doubtless the "Elective Affinities." Some few, as for instance, F. H. Hedge and Margaret Fuller, appreciated the deeper moral import of the work, but to most readers—even to most admirers of Goethe—it was a stumbling block, the supreme example of a depraved, immoral mind. Hedge considered it as illustrative of "the ethics of married life, the mischief of illconsidered and unequal tastes, and the terrible consequences of even mental infidelity to the marriage vow," and Margaret Fuller called it a work of art, "moral in its outward effect and religious even to piety in its spirit." Many found it the natural product of a mind which esteemed intellect above moral-being. The critic in the *New York Review* (1839) termed it "a moral monster"—"a proof of mental rather than moral obliquity, a distorted picture drawn by one accustomed to treat the intellectual physically, to regard virtue and vice, happiness and anguish, bad passions and holy impulses purely as phenomena," whereas G. Bancroft writing much earlier rejoiced that "in the U. S., thanks to the venerated sanctity of domestic attachment the book would be thrown aside with incredulity as a false and dangerous libel on human nature." Wm. Ware in his most vituperative article on Goethe, was certain in his consideration of the work, "that Goethe not only had no morals, but scarcely a knowledge of what morality consists in." Emerson's remarks show that he was neither blind to its deeper import nor free from the suspicion



that it were better unread. His feeling toward it was doubtless one of repulsion. "He (Emerson) said that Goethe had written some things—"Elective Affinities" for instance—which could be readily read only by minds which had undergone individual training. He was the only great writer who had turned upon the moral conventions and demanded by what right they claimed to control his life."<sup>67</sup>

"Wilhelm Meister," thanks to the timely translation of Carlyle, was one of the best-known and probably the most read of Goethe's works in England and America. It was the recipient in some cases of abuse scarcely less trenchant than that heaped upon the "Wahlverwandschaften." Wordsworth, Emerson tells us, (Wks. V, p. 21) "proceeded to abuse Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister" heartily. . . . . He had never gone farther than the first part; so disgusted was he that he threw the book across the room. I deprecated his wrath, and said what I could for the better parts of the book, and he courteously promised to look at it again." De Quincey<sup>68</sup> too was especially ironic in his essay upon the novel, and, of the Americans, Wm. Ware, as one would expect, was again most inconsiderate and outspoken, finding the moral to be: "Young man, yield to your passions; intrigue with a woman and desert her; neglect the business entrusted to you; go strolling through the country in the train of a company of actors; talk about art, etc.". As early as 1829, in the *Southern Review* a critic wrote of it: "There are circumstances in the plot, which however artfully combined and wrought into a whole, are essentially abhorrent from our manners and prejudices."<sup>69</sup> Theodore Parker found it immoral—"The actors in the scenes are low and selfish, for the most part mean and lewd. . . . . Yet there are some fine pictures of life." George H. Calvert characterized it (1836) as "the greatest prose fiction ever produced,"—"presenting so truthful and significant and

art-beautiful a picture of the struggles and attainments, the joys and griefs, the labors and recreations, the capacities and failings of mortal man, that from its study we rise with strength freshened and feelings purified, and our vision of all earthly things brightened." Margaret Fuller, here as in her other appreciations, senses more clearly the underlying motive of the novel, finding in it "the continuation of 'Faust' in the practical sense of the education of man"—"The main spring of action is. . . . a disciple of circumstance, whose marked characteristic is a taste for virtue and knowledge."

It was the first of Goethe's works that Emerson read, and if we consider the prominence which he gives to it in his statements on Goethe, we must conclude that it was a work which he esteemed highly and read carefully. He prized it for its wisdom, its reality, and broad philosophy of life. "We have loved Meister a long time. . . . It wants to be read well; it contains the analysis of life."<sup>70</sup> It was the best specimen, he said, of a higher type of novel than that of costume or circumstance, to which class most of the contemporary English novels had to be relegated; it was a "novel of character," a "noble book,"—"A castle and a wife are not the indispensable conclusion, but the development of character being the problem, the reader is made a partaker of the whole prosperity. Everything good in such a story remains with the reader when the book is closed." That Emerson was not altogether incapable of appreciating Goethe's high motive of individual culture in its relation to social well-being, as were so many of his contemporaries, is shown by the following statement: "It gave the hint of a cultivated society which we found nowhere else. It was founded on power to do what was necessary, each person finding it an indispensable qualification of membership that he could do something useful, as in mechanics or agriculture or other indispensable art; then a probity, a justice was

to be its element, symbolized by the insisting that each property should be cleared of privilege, and should pay its full tax to the State. Then, a perception of beauty was the equally indispensable element of the association, by which each was dignified and all were dignified; then each was to obey his genius to the length of abandonment. They watched each candidate vigilantly, without his knowing that he was observed, and when he had given proof that he was a faithful man, then all doors, all honors, all relations were open to him; high behaviour fraternized with high behaviour, without question of heraldry, and the only power recognized is the force of character." (Wks. XII, p. 376). It was in this regard that he found the argument of the book to be "the passage of a democrat to the aristocracy." (Wks. IV, p. 279). An aristocrat to Emerson was a man of character, of health, of moral integrity and independence, and it is in this sense that he here uses the word. "And this passage is not made in any mean or creeping way, but through the hall door. Nature and character assist, and the rank is made real by sense and probity in the nobles. No generous youth can escape this charm of reality in the book, so that it is highly stimulating to intellect and courage."

Yet he found the novel wanting in the supreme test. Though its problem was the making of character and its knowledge of life profound, it failed, like its author, to attain the highest level of vision and sublimity. It remained in and of the Actual. "I am charmed with the insight; to use a phrase of Ben Johnson's 'it is rammed with life.' I find there actual men and women even too faithfully painted. I am moreover instructed in the possibility of a highly accomplished society, and taught to look for great talent and culture under a grey coat. But this is all. The limits of artificial society are never quite out of sight. The vicious conventions, which hem us in like prison walls and which the poet should explode at

his touch, stand for all they are worth in the newspaper. I am never lifted above myself. I am not transported out of the dominion of the senses, or cheered with an infinite tenderness, or armed with a great trust." (Wks. XII, p. 330).

The comment on the "Meister" in the Essay in the "Representative Men," gives a precise summary of Emerson's critical judgment, and reflects in brief his attitude toward the German poet. "'Wilhelm Meister' is a novel in every sense, the first of its kind, called by its admirers the only delineation of modern society—as if other novels, those of Scott, for example, dealt with costume and condition, this was with the spirit of life. It is a book over which some veil is still drawn. It is read by very intelligent persons with wonder and delight. It is preferred by some such to 'Hamlet,' as a work of genius. I suppose no book of this century can compare with it in its delicious sweetness, so new, so provoking to the mind, gratifying it with so many and so solid thoughts, just insights into life, and manners, and characters; so many good hints for the conduct of life, so many unexpected glimpses into a higher sphere, and never a trace of rhetoric or dullness. A very provoking book to the curiosity of young men of genius, but a very unsatisfactory one. Lovers of light reading, those who look in it for the entertainment they find in a romance, are disappointed. On the other hand, those who begin it with the higher hope to read in it a worthy history of genius, and just award of the laurel to its toils and denials, have also reason to complain. We had an English romance here, not long ago, professing to embody the hope of a new age, and to unfold the political hope of the party called 'Young England,' in which the only reward of virtue is a seat in Parliament, and a peerage. Goethe's romance has a conclusion as lame and immoral. George Sand, in "Consuelo" and its continuation, has sketched a truer



and more dignified picture. In the progress of the story, the characters of the hero and heroine expand at a rate that shivers the porcelain chess-table of aristocratic convention: they quit the society and habits of their rank; they lose their wealth; they become the servants of great ideas, and of the most generous social ends; until, at last, the hero, who is the centre and fountain of an association for the rendering of the noblest benefits to the human race, no longer answers to his own titled name; it sounds foreign and remote in his ear. 'I am only man,' he says; 'I breathe and work for man,' and this in poverty and extreme sacrifices. Goethe's hero, on the contrary, has so many weaknesses and impurities, and keeps such bad company, that the sober English public, when the book was translated, were disgusted. And yet it is crammed with wisdom, with knowledge of the world, and with knowledge of laws; the persons so truly and subtly drawn, and with such few strokes, and not a word too much, the book remains ever so new and unexhausted, that we must even let it go its way, and be willing to get what good from it we can, assured that it has only begun its office, and has millions of readers yet to serve."

"Faust" fared worse than the "Meister." Emerson found it a "painful," "destructive" poem, lacking in affirmation, altogether "one of the most disagreeable books that I can read." The angel-song and chorus at the opening were to him "magazine or 'squirt' poetry." (J. VIII, p. 70). He recognized it to be a most remarkable literary work, and especially exemplary of the literary temper of the age;<sup>71</sup> introversive, sceptical, egoistic. "I find Faust a little too modern and intelligible. We can find such a fabric at several mills, though a little inferior. Faust abounds in the disagreeable. The vice is prurient, learned, Parisian. In the presence of Jove, Priapus may be allowed as an offset, but here he is an equal hero. The egotism, the wit, is calculated. The book is undeni-



ably written by a master, and stands unhappily related to the whole modern world; but it is a very disagreeable chapter of literature, and accuses the author as well as the times." (Wks. VIII, p. 69). Goethe was satisfied to represent the modern mind, but he "does not represent the Eternal mind."<sup>72</sup> "The miraculous, the beauty which we can manufacture at no mill, can give no account of, it wants." (J. VIII, p. 245). In other words, it never thrilled him with truly great and noble sentiments, it never lifted him out of himself and as by a miracle gave him, if only for a moment, a glimpse of the sublime heights of poetry. "It marked itself by a certain predominance of the intellect in the balance of powers." C. E. Norton records that at one time, when dining with Lewes and Emerson, the latter in the course of some discussion about Goethe amazed Lewes by saying: "I hate 'Faust'; it is a bad book."<sup>73</sup> But we must not infer that Emerson was totally oblivious to some of its greater qualities and beauty. The Second Part he never read carefully in its entirety and hence missed the true import of the poem and failed to read understandingly its message of human salvation, which is to be attained only through labors undertaken in the spirit of purest altruism. Mr. J. B. Thayer tells us that in 1871 Emerson said of it that it was "only a sketch," and that his knowledge of this was "only partial."<sup>74</sup> He probably appreciated its prodigious versatility and largeness of wisdom and was very likely not a little puzzled by its amazing complexity of imaginative flight. On the whole, the Second Part of 'Faust' was to him the Helena act, which he first learned to know and appreciate, probably, through Carlyle's essay. "In 'Helena' Faust is sincere and represents actual, cultivated, strong-natured man; the book would be farago without the sincerity of Faust." (J. VI, p. 466). And in this vein, he adds: "I think the second part of Faust the grandest enterprise of literature that has been at-

tempted since the 'Paradise Lost'." "It is a philosophy of history set in poetry: the work of one who found himself the master of histories, mythologies, philosophies, sciences, and national literatures, in the encyclopaedical manner in which modern erudition, with its international intercourse of the whole earth's population, researches into Indian, Etruscan, and all Cyclopaean arts, geology, chemistry, astronomy; and every one of these kingdoms assuming a certain aerial and poetic character, by reason of the multitude. . . . . These are not wild miraculous songs, but elaborate poems, to which the poet has confided the results of eighty years of observation. This reflective and critical wisdom makes the poem more truly the flower of this time. It dates itself." (Wks. IV, p. 271). It is not the artistic technique of the work, but its richness of content, that attracts him. In it he saw real greatness: "After taxing Goethe as a courtier, artificial, unbelieving, worldly—I took up his book of *Helena*, and found him an Indian of the wilderness, a piece of pure nature like an apple or an oak, large as morning or night, and virtuous as a briar-rose." (Wks. III, p. 242). Yet he admired in it its grotesque fancy, its symbolism, and imaginative reality. "And although that poem be as vague and fantastic as a dream, yet it is much more attractive than the more regular dramatic pieces of the same author, for the reason that it operates a wonderful relief to the mind from the routine of customary images,—awakens the reader's invention and fancy by the wild freedom of the design, and by the unceasing succession of brisk shocks of surprise." (Wks. II, p. 33).

## CHAPTER IV.

### CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

#### I. THE IDEALIST AND THE REALIST.

The norm of American criticism was, as we have seen, in the main, ethical. The New England Transcendental revolt remained rooted in the Puritanic tradition. It fed upon the speculative thought of German Romanticism and of those who had come under its influence, and also upon the teachings of all the great idealists, ancient and modern, eastern and western. But it was in origin a religious revolt, and remained so in general tenor, its foremost representative being primarily in deed and thought a preacher and minister of the Spirit. Emerson's philosophy, in so far as it can be termed a philosophy, was subsidiary to his ethical teaching. Mere intellectuality was to him inferior to morals, and metaphysical speculation was of value only in so far as it furnished a support to his ethical doctrine. His ideas were to him "pegs to hang morals on," centers from which to go forth to teach the conduct of life, and it is in this light, as a spiritual and moral force, that we must view his thought and work.

Fundamental to every tenet of his philosophy lies the validity of the moral law, and in this he finds his optimistic assurance of the positive gain of life. At their core all things, he said, are moral, or, in his own words: "The moral law lies at the center of nature and radiates to the circumference." (Wks. I, p. 41). It is this distinction that sets him apart as a thinker and distinguishes

him as the New England product of the larger Romantic group. To him the primal cause is not force or energy unqualified, but is moral energy, moral force. God's ways are moral ways and reach their most perfect expression when untrammelled and uncorrupted by the petty, selfish desire or will of man. Man's duty it is to serve God, and in its purest form this signifies self-surrender, free and unconditional, to God's will as intuited in the human breast and the human mind. He is the greatest man who abandons himself most freely and impersonally to the divine inspiration and becomes in sooth as "a transparent eyeball" to the divine vision. Thus does self-reliance mean God-reliance. The will of man in its purity is servant to the will of God, and so do both attain their highest ends. In their union lie strength and power. The man who fails because of selfish perversity or fancy of this submission, and seeks to follow some personal vain conceit, is a blind, a selfish, and a "vicious" subject. His error is pernicious: his trust is in himself, not in the God within him, and therein he is a half-man, false to the law of laws, which is an expression of the Moral-sentiment. His gain is abortive and is a loss, for it is negative; the moral, the good, alone is positive. Truth-to-self marks the nobility of man, for truth to self is always service to God, and except that a thing is serviceable to God it is not moral, but false. Man must divine the infinity and godliness of his nature, the omnipresence and omnipotence of the soul, and of this he must become a willing instrument.

"All things are moral, and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature. Therefore is nature glorious with form, color, and motion, that every globe in the remotest heaven; every chemical change from the rudest crystal up to the laws of life; every change of vegetation from the first principle of growth in the eye of a leaf, to the tropical forest and

antediluvian coal-mine; every animal function from the sponge up to Hercules, shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments. Therefore is nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source. This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature as to seem the end for which it was made. Whatever private purpose is answered by any member or part, this is its public and universal function, and is never omitted. Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use. When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for an ulterior service. In God every end is converted into a new means. Thus the use of commodity, regarded by itself, is mean and squalid. But it is to the mind an education in the doctrine of Use, namely, that a thing is good only in so far as it serves; that a conspiracy of parts and efforts to the production of an end, is essential to any being." (Wks. I, p. 39).

Emerson's interest in an object is always in its moral uses. As an idealist he "sees the world in God." In common with Schelling and the Romanticists he finds that the Divine is expressed in the outer world in unconscious form, and in the inner world in conscious form. "The world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious. But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subjected to the human will. Its serene order is inviolable by us." (Wks. I, p. 64). It is part and parcel of that all-containing Spirit which Schelling termed *Weltseele* and Emerson *Oversoul*, and which is ever coming to birth in continuous emanation in this world's manifold and endless flux and flow. Energy, divine and hence moral, is conceived as fundamental to existence, and in man and



in nature it reaches conditioned and finite expression. In the soul of man it attains its highest known expression; for the soul contains potentially the entire universe of experience, and in the process of life is unfolded in due measure. The individual soul must be receptive of the divine influx, for its activity lies in its self-surrender, in its passivity, in its obedience to the divine law. Such moments of absolute receptive submission to God are its growing-moments and mark its development. It is then that the divine hand writes its message upon the individual soul and liberates it. "When it (the Oversoul) breathes through his (man's) intelligence, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love. And the blindness of the intellect begins when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins, when the individual would be something of himself. All reform aims, in some particular, to let the great soul have its way through us; in other words to engage us to obey." (Wks. II, p. 271).

Upon this basic conception rest the principal doctrines of Emerson's teaching. Man must acquiesce in the will of God. In complete submergence of self and annihilation of all mere selfish aim, he comes to his true being as an individual. His activity must be that of an agent of the Oversoul: His own will must never be at variance with the Overwill. "We need only obey." Individual choice lies only in acquiescence to the divine will, and thus action becomes spontaneous. The mode of knowledge is intuition and that of action is impulse, for man's act as his thought is prompted by the divine spirit within him. He must abandon himself to its call. In such abandonment, in enthusiasm and ecstasy, there is purer being; then the divine energy works to fullest expression, for in this state it is freest and most truly itself, and under these circumstances man is most firmly reliant,

because he is then in deepest accord with the Divinity within him. "We love characters in proportion as they are impulsive and spontaneous. The less a man thinks or knows about his virtues the better we like him." (Wks. II, p. 133). And the truly great man, the virtuous man, is one who finds himself ever in unison with nature's workings: he is the man of power, the man of character, because he is a generous partaker in the moral nature of the world, and through him this order comes most completely into its own. "The termination of the world in a man, appears to be the last victory of intelligence." (Wks. I, p. 205). "And so I think that the last lesson of life, the choral song which rises from all elements and all angels, is, a voluntary obedience, a necessitated freedom. Man is made of the same atoms as the world is, he shares the same impressions, predispositions, and destiny. When his mind is illuminated, when his heart is kind, he throws himself joyfully into the sublime order, and does, with knowledge, what the stones do by structure." (Wks. VI, p. 240).

Thus in the light of the soul all men are equal. The soul is the great equalizer in that each individual shares in its glory and benefits in its power. It is not intellectual or physical strength but moral intuition which unites mankind into a large brotherhood. The soul teaches man the indifference of circumstance and the worth of the moral law. In all the constant flux of the phenomena, in the incessant strife, the duality, the antagonism of forces, man finds permanency in the all-containing soul. "The soul is." Blinded often in his effort and forgetful of his true destiny man falls prey to lesser aims, to the vain illusions of self, and in due measure Nature inflicts punishment. For in the natural order all things are dual. For every gain there is a loss and for every loss a gain. "In nature nothing can be given, all things are sold." The law of polarity, which is so evident in every depart-

ment of the Goethean philosophy, is to be met everywhere in Emerson. "Every excess causes a defect; every defect an excess. Every sweet has its sour; every evil its good. Every faculty, which is a receiver of pleasure, has an equal penalty put on its abuse. It is to answer for its moderation with its life." (Wks. II, p. 98). The evil and the good receive always fit compensation. "There is always some levelling circumstance, that puts down the overbearing, the strong, the rich, the fortunate, substantially on the same ground with all others." The Overwill is not to be violated with impunity. There is no chance, no anarchy in the universe. All is system and gradation. "The permanent interest of every man is, never to be in a false position, but to have the weight of Nature to back him in all he does. Riches and poverty are a thick or thin costume; and our life—the life of all of us—identical. For we transcend the circumstance continually, and taste the real quality of existence; as in our employments, which only differ in the manipulations, but express the same laws; or in our thoughts, which wear no silks and taste no ice-creams. We see God face to face every hour, and know the savour of Nature." (Wks. VI., p. 373). Emerson calls for the complete man, for him who, soul-reliant, is master of his several faculties, not the slave of any individual one; for him who goes always and only to the source of things to obtain his knowledge, to universals not particulars. Nature stretches out her arms to embrace the man who is equal to her greatness, and such a one is to be found in the all-rounded personality, in the larger soul, in the lover of Truth, Virtue, and Beauty; the man who is indifferent to ends as such, but zealous in the freeing-power and the totality of the Spirit. "Truth, and goodness, and beauty are but different faces of the same All," and one who merely reads the one face sees merely a part and remains dwarfed and incomplete. His is not the deepest

insight; his vision is obscured; and his accomplishment is disappointing because it is the product not of an all-pervading, all-compelling genius, but of some over-developed talent. "And in common life, whosoever has seen a person of powerful character and happy genius, will have remarked how easily he took all things along with him,—the persons, the opinions, and the day, and nature became ancillary to a man." Such is the great man, sweet of temper and cheerful, tolerant, following the call of his faculties to endless exertion, hitching his wagon to a star, and keeping with tender courage in the midst of the crowd the independence of solitude—a moral instrument in the divine workings of reality.

Man and his "supplement," nature, are, then, moral agents. They are in and of the Moral-sentiment, and in their pure manifestations expressions of the divine energy. They are contained in God. So then must their workings be moral, as they are responsible to God. The aim of every thing is a moral aim, and it is to be tested by its moral value. All things that are valid and have power are of necessity moral. Emerson always judges everything in the light of the Moral-ideal.

It is in this direction that we have found his criticisms of Goethe especially poignant, for it is here that the vital distinction between the New Englander and the German lay. The former has the roots of his thought firmly embedded in the ethical tradition of Puritanic Calvinism, the latter in the æsthetic tradition of the Renaissance. Emerson would ever supplant the thing by the thought, the particular by the universal. He constructs his theoretical scheme and fits the empirical world into it; he starts out with a moral premise and treats all things in such a manner as to substantiate his assertion. As he says, "The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet (spiritual) conforms things to his thoughts."



(Wks. I, p. 52). He reads the riddle of nature not as it appears to his senses, but as the divine intuition suggests to him its deepest meaning. He has little sympathy with a purely scientific method. He is always subjective.

"I write of things that are  
Not what appears;  
Of things as they are in the eye of God  
Not in the eye of man."

(J. II, p. 394).

He does not penetrate the permanent by means of the transitory, the idea by the symbol, but explains the symbol by the idea, the transitory by means of the permanent. "We bring with us to every experiment the innate universal laws. These, while they exist in the mind as ideas, stand around us in nature for ever embodied." (Wks. II, p. 195). His idea of evolution—the meaning of which he, like many others, sensed before Darwin gave it scientific exposition—was more closely related to that of Schelling and Goethe, an idealistic interpretation involving the idea of the universal type, of which the phenomena present continuous emanations. In this respect the efforts and studies of his friend, Agassiz, helped and confirmed him in some of his central thoughts. And here we may add, that it was in the spirit of reverence, akin to that of the noblest Romantic poets, that he always approached nature. His reflective bent of mind looked always for moral truths and in the presence of nature he was wont to feel himself closely in touch with the great Moral-spirit in which he believed all things subsisted, and as by a miracle to sense what he termed "the deeper secret of the hour."

The Goethean manner of approaching nature was, as we have seen, essentially realistic. To him nature was a Unity, filled with living force, and his conception of it was vitalistic and may be termed a dynamic pantheism.



His aim in his study was to understand this vital essence by observing its operations in the constantly changing phenomenal world. His method was objective and scientific, but even in his scientific labors he approached the world with the vision of the artist; his thought was always constructive; and the goal of his analysis was ever a new synthesis. The distinction between him and a Romanticist, such as Schelling, is that he remains in this world and of it, basing his investigation on the material of sensuous experience. He would penetrate from without to find the inner kernel and not work outwardly from a presupposed kernel within. What for Schelling was a metaphysical principle is for Goethe poetic and constructive observation. It was primarily objective study of nature, illumined by artistic insight, and not metaphysical speculation, that unlocked for him the mystery of things.

And herein too lies the distinction in method between Goethe and Emerson. The one was realist and artist, the other idealist and preacher. The one looked at the world, a calm observer, and divined its hidden meanings in the light of his sensuous and spiritual experience. The other looked forth from the gateway of the Moral-sentiment and watched the secret workings of the Spirit in the domains of natural life. Thus we are prepared at the outset to find in them two different types, distinctive, it is true, in their method and general philosophical outlook, but similar in their estimation of the ultimate values of life.

Emerson was attracted to Goethe because he found in him a broad and quick sympathy with life in all its forms and an all-comprehensive mind which was in touch with well-nigh every field of knowledge and had a word to say of each, but he was in turn repelled because in Goethe he came in contact with a type of man and mind which he himself had difficulty in understanding. It was largely

the inherent nature of Emerson's genius which prevented him from attaining any adequate appreciation of Goethe, the man and his work as a whole. In these two men there is to be found a divergence of type such as Schiller so ably analyzed in his essay on Naive and Sentimental Poetry and characterized by the terms idealist and realist. Each type approaches its object in its own way, the realist with an open mind, quick to respond and to perceive, the idealist with an idea, an assumption by which he endeavors to reach an understanding. In Emerson as in Schiller we have the reflective poet, the moral-idealist, who dwells largely in the solitude of thought and moves men by the forceful strength of his ideas, his moral enthusiasm and faith in human progress and betterment, his direct spiritual appeal and power to liberate the soul and set it soaring. In Goethe, as in Shakespeare, we find the 'naive' poet, the man who is of and in life and as an artist succeeds in holding the mirror up to nature. This latter type moves us by its instinctive truth to nature and life; humanity is presented to us in all fidelity, not as it ought to be but as it is and ever was; we are spiritually freed by being morally clarified and purged. The realist seeks to establish his happiness in this world; he is an empiricist and resigns himself submissively to natural and physical laws and to the ways of the social world. He is a part of nature and does not desire to break with her; his freedom is the freedom which nature owns; he is a child of the world, a man among men, naively enjoying life and content with what the present offers, an optimist who finds each thing organically related to the whole and learns to revere in it an all-pervading and ever present spiritual force. The idealist, on the other hand, turns to his ideal to find happiness in spiritual freedom. He is a transcendentalist and stands in opposition to nature; his is a militant attitude; he does not resign himself to the world; he heralds his faith in

spiritual freedom, and opposes and would, if necessary, even deny the world to realize his ideal. His attitude is always a moral one; he demands great individual deeds and admires the man who can stake his all on some great principle. The realist bases his moral values upon life as a whole; he is calmer and more judicious, and his acts do not stand out in especial prominence; he seeks happiness for the individual by accommodating him to the ways of the world, and is never out of touch with reality, and hence he is often charged with "worldliness." He does not exhort us to great deeds nor lift us to sublime heights by the liberating force of his thought, as does the idealist. His is a more sympathetic appreciation of life, for he gives us life itself in his art, not ideas concerning it.

In any comparative study of the character of the genius of Goethe and Emerson the above distinction becomes at once apparent, and although the great danger of generalizations in an undertaking of this sort is fully realized, we find that all we can do in treating men of such complexity and comprehensiveness of thought and achievement is to limit ourselves to a cross-section, as it were, of the work of each. Thus the fundamental consideration which presents itself is an ethical one, and is dependent in the case of each poet upon his individual nature and the larger thought-environment. Emerson, the idealist, the son of puritanic New England, placed his faith in the Ideal, in which he alone found salvation for humanity. Man had fallen, he thought; his ways and his will were 'vicious,' and it was only as he became the willing tool of the Spirit and freely surrendered himself to the divine will, that he was to be saved. Emerson belongs with Kant and Plato to the great idealists, to whom the reality of the Spirit only brings satisfaction. Man is not as he should be; he must submit to the Moral-order and will in the light of the Moral-law. His duty it is to will the right, to force himself to obey, or as Emerson

would put it perhaps, to resign himself to obey. He must be reborn in the Spirit. Herein lies freedom, "necessitated freedom," the individual freely resigning himself to work, indeed to be, in the glory of the Moral-ideal. Only in this respect does man show his superiority over nature. "The evolution of a highly-destined society must be moral; it must run in the grooves of the celestial wheels. It must be catholic in aims. What is moral? It is the respecting in action catholic or universal ends. Hear the definition which Kant gives of moral conduct: 'Act always so that the immediate motive of thy will may become a universal rule for all intelligent beings'." (Wks. VII, p. 26). The distinction between the Goethean ethical doctrine and that of Emerson is, then, essentially that between the ethics of Goethe and those of Kant; for New England Transcendentalism united puritanic rigorism with the teachings of the Romantic philosophy and hence in ethical consideration preferred the principles of Kant to those of Schelling.

As Kant and Emerson put their faith in the ideal order, Goethe believed firmly in the natural, in humanity. A born realist, he defended human nature and looked upon it with trust and love. He did not approach reality like the idealist with an ideal order in mind and therefore did not find that it failed to measure up to his own standard. Err as man will, he said, so long as he strives he is instinctively moral—"so viel der Mensch fehlen und irren mag, mit seinem tiefsten Wesen ist er doch auf das Rechte und Gute gerichtet, ist er dem Göttlichen zugewendet, aus dem er stammt;" or as the Lord expresses it in "Faust":

"Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange,  
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst."

It is only by means of error that man may learn to find his way and to know the good—"Es irrt der Mensch



solang er strebt",—for mistakes are unavoidable to one who strives, and only he who has striven on untiringly in a life of activity and struggle is worthy of salvation and of divine grace. The words of the chorus of angels who bear aloft Faust's immortal remains impress this fundamental conviction upon us:

"Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,  
Den können wir erlösen.'  
Und hat an ihm die Liebe gar  
Von oben teilgenommen,  
Begegnet ihm die selige Schar  
Mit herzlichem Willkommen."

(l. 11936 f.)

And in the terse couplet of the Divan-poem (Wke. 5—p. 119), Goethe again clearly states his faith that the gates of a future world always open to the man whose life has been intensely human in its active strife and struggle:—

"Denn ich bin ein Mensch gewesen,  
Und das heisst ein Kämpfer sein."

That human nature was in itself depraved and evil was a conception abhorrent to Goethe; this it was which he severely criticised in the orthodox church-doctrine, and which repelled him from Kant's views on the radical evil in human nature.<sup>75</sup> He could not become reconciled to the teaching that man by self-abnegation and self-annihilation, if necessary, should force himself to perform the good. The Kantian and the Emersonian idea of freedom was foreign to him, as was also the need of an inner spiritual revolution or liberation by force of will. He gave an optimistic affirmation of life, because of the intense humanity of his own nature. Looking upon life in its biological aspect he accepted man as he found him.

Goethe was artist and poet as Shakespeare was artist and poet, and portrayed mankind as the experiences of



his life revealed it to him; in the infinite variety of life lay his interests. Man, he thought, should be what nature has destined him to become. Within each individual there is an inner original endowment, a monad, which is in fact the very essence of his individuality, or the "Dämon," and this, in its reaction upon the environment develops to full and conscious form and power. There is no force, no inner revolution, no sharp break in Goethe, for his faith is in the continuous natural growth of the organism, an incessant groping toward the light. He emphasizes the natural goodness of humanity; his is a joyful, cheerful faith in mankind. Individual inclination should not be thwarted, but carefully trained and directed. "Gewisz ein Gemüt, das Neigung zum Guten hat, musz uns, wenn wir es gewahr werden, schon höchlich erfreuen; aber Schöneres ist nichts in der Welt als Neigung durch Vernunft und Gewissen Geleitet." (Wke. 16: p. 239).

Emerson subjects individual inclination to the service of the Moral-law. For he considers individual inclination, if it run counter to the laws of conscience, to be wicked and vicious and self-destructive, and therefore he demands that it be suppressed or stifled. The individual's duty is a rigorous resignation to the ways of God. Here is a point-of-view which Goethe would scarcely accept. His aim was to direct individual impulse rather than force or stifle it. Duty to him was well-directed inclination;—"Pflicht—wo man liebt was man sich selbst befiehlt." Truth to one's own individual nature, self-assertion, a realization of one's possibilities and limitations to better effect one's aim in life, in short, incessant activity as a social unit in a social group—this is the substance of the Goethean practical wisdom of life. The great teaching of "Faust" and of the "Wanderjahre" is that man's noblest mission on earth is realized in social-service; herein only does he prove true to his inherent nature and

find happiness. Emerson, the practical idealist, finds man's mission not in the direct service of society, not primarily in the service of his fellow-men, but in the service of the Ideal, of God.<sup>76</sup> This is to him the highest type of service and inclusive of all others, for only in exercise of it is man true to the divine nature of which he is a part.

"He that feeds men serveth few;  
He serves all who dare be true."

But Goethe, the practical realist, keeps his eyes fastened on this earth and on the labors of man for himself and his fellow-men. "Tätig zu sein," he says, "ist des Menschen erste Bestimmung. . . . Ein tüchtiger Mensch, der hier schon etwas ordentliches zu sein gedenkt, und dadurch täglich zu streben, zu kämpfen und zu wirken hat, lässt die künftige Welt auf sich beruhen und ist tätig und nützlich in dieser."<sup>77</sup> So too Faust philosophizes as he surveys the strivings and experiences of his life. (l. 11441 f.) :—

"Der Erdenkreis ist mir genug bekannt.  
Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrant;  
Tor, wer dorthin die Augen blinzeln'd richtet,  
Sich über Wolken seinesgleichen dichtet!  
Er stehe fest und sehe hier sich um;  
Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.  
Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen!  
Was er erkennt, lässt sich ergreifen."

This fundamental ethical distinction is reflected in many particulars of thought, among others in the conceptions of nature, of art, of character and culture, of greatness in men, and of government. Emerson places a moral evaluation upon each and every object and upon each individual act, whereas Goethe is far more inclined to regard the sum-total and the end of the action. "Der Zweck des Lebens," he said, "ist das Leben selbst."

Goethe is one of the noblest exponents of the pure spirit of the Renaissance. Although he realized the wisdom of the Kantian categorical imperative and in later years laid emphasis upon it, he did so passively rather than actively. "Ich habe vor dem kategorischen Imperativ allen Respekt, ich weisz wie viel Gutes aus ihm hervorgehen kann, allein man musz es damit nicht zu weit treiben, denn sonst führt diese Idee der ideellen Freiheit sicher zu nichts Gutem."<sup>78</sup> His ideal was essentially aesthetic in the largest sense; and he believed with Schiller that aesthetic development was the soundest preparation for the tasks of life. His desire was to produce and perfect in so far as possible the "harmonious-being," the large, well-rounded personality, the cultured man, the man of power and beauty, one in whom spirit and sense were developed and united in perfect unity. Herein he shows his relation to Shaftesbury and his followers, to Romanticism and the sanest ideals of the Storm and Stress. Man should aim at universality of genius and strive to become a "virtuoso," a superman; he should experience life to the full, exercise all his faculties, and in this manner effect an harmonious development of his own individual personality. As Wilhelm Meister writes: "Mich selbst, ganz wie ich da bin, auszubilden, das war dunkel von Jugend auf mein Wunsch und meine Absicht." (Wke. 18, p. 13). This should be the aim of a broad and general culture, and to this aim all others are subsidiary, except that it itself has as its final goal service for mankind. The individual nature should become a complete and harmonious personality, which in all its totality should be ever in the service of humanity. In this regard Goethe's aim is especially manly and moral. The man of culture shall exist not for his own sake, but to serve others, and he must have a distinct vocation among his many avocations. The individual must submit

to the institutions of society and fit himself into the social group where his personality may find the largest field for expression and become most effective.

This ideal of the perfected and harmoniously-developed personality, the complete man, was also, we remember, that of Emerson; the distinction lay in the respective means of attaining the ideal. Goethe believed that it was by natural and well-directed development of the individual nature that the ideal was to be realized: Emerson taught that it was attainable only in so far as the individual could bring himself into submissive abandonment to the inpourings of the divine energy.

Fundamental to the Goethean conception of life is the idea of Force—Kraft—as the Primal Cause of the universe. It is this that is ever active in the outer realm as in the inner, in nature as in personality and character. Personality is not one talent or another, but is expressive in one and all; it is the driving energy that is in and of and above any individual faculty and gives to it active value. Without personality the individual is nothing; there is naught superior to it, for in it the individual nature is partaker of the Divinity. It is expressed in a man's actions and deeds, and is developed by constant contact with the world of men. It is that possession which every individual cherishes as most peculiarly his own, as most intimately himself, as his own distinct individuality. "In diesem Sinne dürfen wir dem Schwachen, ja dem Feigen selbst Charakter zuschreiben, denn er gibt auf, was andere Menschen über alles schätzen, was aber nicht zu seiner Natur gehört; die Ehre, den Ruhm, nur damit er seine Persöhnlichkeit erhalte. . . . Einen starken Charakter nennt man, wenn er sich allen äusserlichen Hindernissen mächtig entgegensetzt und seine Eigentümlichkeit, selbst mit Gefahr, seine Persöhnlichkeit zu verlieren, durchsetzen sucht. Einen groszen Charakter

nennt man, wenn die Stärke desselben zugleich mit groszen unübersehblichen, unendlichen Eigenschaften, Fähigkeiten verbunden ist und durch ihn ganz originelle unerwartete Absichten, Plane, Taten, zum Vorschein kommen." Here there is no implication of moral right or wrong. Character is measured by its achievement, by what it has proved itself capable of doing, by its power to act. "Das Haupt-fundament des Charakters ist das entschiedene Wollen ohne Rücksicht auf Recht und Unrecht, auf Gut und Böse, auf Wahrheit oder Irrtum; es ist das was jede Partei an den Ihrigen so höchlich schätzt. . . . . Der Charakter bleibt derselbe, er mag sich dem (Irrtum) oder der (Wahrheit) ergeben. . . . . Dessen ungeachtet bleibt der Charakter immer Charakter, er mag das Rechte oder das Unrechte, das Wahre oder das Falsche wollen und eifrig dafür arbeiten." (Wke. 40: p. 261). With Goethe, then, the great character is a man of great personal power and magnetism, able and independent, capable of thinking great thoughts and doing great deeds and always master of himself and of events.<sup>79</sup> Personal force, not as with Emerson personal goodness, is its standard. Goethe would ask—what can the man do? Emerson would inquire—what sort of a man is he? Is he a worthy individual? "The foundation of culture, as of character," writes Emerson, "is at last the moral sentiment. This is the fountain of power, preserves its eternal newness, draws its own rent out of every novelty of science. Science corrects the old creeds. . . . . Yet it does not surprise the moral-sentiment. That was older, and awaited expectant these larger insights." (Wks. VIII, p. 228). In this sense every man may possess character and culture. The Emersonian view is essentially individualistic and democratic, and bears more directly upon individual conduct, refinement, and good-behaviour. It is rather a state of mind than an accomp-



lishment. Truly democratic, its aim is service. That man is cultured who in his own immediate walk of life feels his responsibilities to the larger whole and resigns himself freely to the divinations of the Moral-sentiment—a self-reliant, cheerful, active personality—one who “likes to see a fine barn as well as a good tragedy.” (J. II, p. 246). “I look upon the simple and childish virtues of veracity and honesty as the root of all that is sublime in character.” (Wks. VI, p. 322). This ideal is practical and moral and teaches “the grandeur of duty, the power of character,” the nobility of the virtuous life. It places emphasis, not so much upon individual perfection, as upon individual obligation and responsibility to God. It teaches not the art of life, the harmonious being, but the conduct of life, the moral being, and aims to produce the good citizen and the man of character. It aims “to interest the man more in his public than in his private quality,” and to bring about “that sublime health which values one moment as another, and makes us great in all conditions, and is the only definition we have of freedom and power”—namely, character. “The secret of culture is to learn, that a few great points steadily reappear, alike in poverty of the obscurest farm, and in the miscellany of metropolitan life, and that these few are alone regarded,—the escape from all false ties; courage to be what we are; and love of what is simple and beautiful; independence and cheerful relation—these are the essentials—these, and the wish to serve,—and to add somewhat to the well-being of men.” (Wks. VI, p. 278).

This difference in the idea of culture is in a sense racial and national and is of importance to any understanding of the causes which lay at the basis of Emerson's opinion of Goethe. It is in a way the key to the race-mind or temper. Coleridge attempted to analyze racial differences in “The Friend,” where he characterized the

English Genius as one that looks to the Past and the Present, practical, careful—"a disposition to avoid extremes in theory and practice and a feeling of the necessity of compromise accompanying sense," and the German as one that looks to the Past and the Future, with a "tendency toward encyclopaedic and systematic learning, method, speculation, and a love of completeness and totality." Emerson too has again and again hinted at some such fundamental variance as in: "Slowsure Britain's secular might, And the German's inward sight;" or in the note on culture in the Journals for 1837: "How much meaning the Germans affix to the word, and how unlike to the English sense! The Englishman goes to see a museum or a mountain for itself; the German for himself; the Englishman for entertainment, the German for culture. The German is conscious and his aims are great. The Englishman lives from his eyes, and is immersed in the apparent world. Our culture comes not alone from the grand and beautiful, but also from the trivial and sordid." The Goethean conception of culture in regard to its ultimate ends, was essentially moral and looked to practical application. He believed it every man's duty to make the most of himself by developing his own faculties to the utmost of his power within the limitations of his own particular environment and then to surrender this larger self to human-welfare. He considered the man of broad culture most useful to social well-being. As Emerson and the majority of his contemporaries conceived it in their study of his works and life, it seemed to them essentially egoistic, selfish, aristocratic, a thing to be attained by the select few, not by the many, and formative of an aristocracy of culture. This was the message which the "Dichtung und Wahrheit" brought to them and first revealed to the English-speaking world, said Emerson. "That a man exists for

culture; not for what can be accomplished in him," was, he thought, "the expression of an idea—now familiar to the world through the German mind, but a novelty to England Old and New." (Wks. IV, p. 285). He failed to note that the Goethean ideal of self-culture was a means to larger altruistic purpose. To the New Englander as an idealist and democrat, the man of culture was the virtuous man, and culture was the nobility of the heart or the soul and came direct from God. It was not the possession of fully developed talents and faculties, of a mine of encyclopaedic knowledge and brilliancy of intellect, but it was rather man's relation to his talents and knowledge, his command of them, and his ability to put them to good uses, whether they were manifold or meagre. It was not quantity, but quality that counted. "It is not what talents or genius a man has, but how he is to his talents, that constitutes friendship and character." (Wks. VI, p. 193). Always moral strength only was of avail.

As regards the nature of government we find again the same diversity of opinion, which we have noted as characteristic of the realistic and idealistic points of view. To Emerson, morality is the object of government. "The end of all political struggle is to establish morality as the basis of all legislation. It is not free institutions, 'tis not a republic, 'tis not a democracy, that is the end,—no, but only the means. . . . . This is the consolation on which we rest in the darkness of the future, and the afflictions of today (1862), that the government of the world is moral, and does destroy what is not." Goethe, however, gave expression to another and characteristic view. He believed that in the world, whether we would have it so or not. Might rules, and that upon Might depends self-preservation; a Might which desires naught but the morally Right there never has been and never will be. Thus in the

French Revolution, as in all revolution, he as a contemporary could see no real advantage; it seemed to him only a case of Might versus Might. Speaking of the subjugation and division of Poland, he said:—"Ich stelle mich höher als die gewöhnlichen platten moralischen Politiker; ich spreche es geradezu aus: kein König hält Wort, kann es nicht halten, musz stets den gebieterischen Umständen nachgeben; die Polen wären doch untergegangen, muszten nach ihrer ganzen verwirrten Sinnesweise untergehen; sollte Preuszen mit leeren Händen dabei ausgehen, während Russland und Osterreich zugriffen? Für uns arme Philister ist die entgegengesetzte Handlungsweise Pflicht, nicht für die Mächtigen der Erde."

"Sage mir, was das für Pracht ist?  
 Auszre Grösze, leerer Schein!  
 O! zum Henker! Wo die Macht ist,  
 Ist doch auch das Recht, zu sein."

(Wke. 4, p. 134).

Goethe carried his firm trust in the order of nature into his ideas of government and politics. His studies of life and nature taught him that power and might ruled everywhere, and that the state was happiest in which the power was invested in a wise and enlightened ruler who had at heart the welfare of his people. He looked upon the state as an organic unit in which each individual played a proper and useful part and thus best served his own ends and those of society. His thought was cosmopolitan and humanitarian, and he refused to be limited by national and racial political prejudice. "Römer patriotismus! Davor bewähr' uns Gott wie vor einer Riesengestalt;" Goethe's aims were social in the largest sense. He hated violence and revolution and considered them socially harmful. "Ich hasse jeden gewalt-samen Umsturz, weil dabei ebenso viel Gutes vernichtet als gewonnen wird. Ich hasse die, welche ihn anführen,



wie die, welche dazu Ursache geben. Aber bin ich darum kein Freund des Volkes? Denkt denn jeder rechtlich gesinnte Mann etwa anders? Sie wissen, wie sehr ich mich über jede Verbesserung freue, welche die Zukunft uns etwa in Aussicht stellt. Aber, wie gesagt, jedes Gewaltsame, Sprunghafte ist mir in der Seele zuwider, denn es ist nicht naturgemäsz."<sup>80</sup>

Here too we have the moral-idealist contrasted with the realist as regards the nature of government, the American proud of his political ideal and its possibilities, and the European, conservative and looking to the immediate exigency of order and social well-being irrespective of any immediate moral limitation. Emerson with true American instinct sees the solution of all political difficulties in a republican form of government whereas Goethe looks upon a republic as an impractical idea<sup>1</sup>, and regards an "enlightened-despotism" as more in accord with the natural order and more practically serviceable. "Democracy," says Emerson, "is better for us, because the religious sentiment of the present time accords better with it." The formation of character, the culture of men is the highest end of government, he says. "To educate the wise man the State exists." It is made up of individuals, whom it is the State's aim to educate, and thereby improve its institutions,—and then "the moral sentiment will write the law of the land." (Wks. III, p. 204). This too is distinctly the ideal of Schiller and Goethe, but Goethe looks to its realization under a monarchical form of government rather than in a republic, considering the present state of social advancement.

The great moral teaching of Goethe's riper works is self-renunciation; this becomes the message in "Faust," "Meister," and in his other mature productions, and this it is that Emerson failed to find, especially in specific practice in the life of the poet. The idealist and the realist again diverge in their interpretation. For Goethe



self-renunciation is to be practised for the sake of the individual as a social-being, for social-welfare; it is a doctrine not of personal loss, but of subordination, the surrender of the individual in the interests of the universal, of the momentary desire for the sake of the lasting good, of the whim to procure the deeper happiness. Goethe does not forget the self; the individual freely denies himself of his desire that greater profit may come to him in the form of happy and cheerful labor among his fellows. But Emerson rather scorns such a standpoint: he regards man as a moral-being primarily, not as a social-being. Self-renunciation is of benefit to the individual primarily as a moral-being. There is a spiritual compensation and thereby a practical one. Self-sacrifice is God-service. In Emerson the doctrine of self-renunciation was not a thing learned from the vicissitudes of experience as a safeguard for self-preservation, but it was born in the blood and was the cardinal virtue of the Puritanic conscience. It was man's duty to renounce his own sinful purposes and serve God. "Society is everywhere in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. . . . Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist." (Wks. II, p. 49). Therefore man need not give up his interests for the sake of society or for his own safety as a member of society. Rather he should forfeit all, his own safety as a social-unit and the entire social-state, if need be, for the sake of Truth, for the sake of the Moral-ideal.

"'Tis Man's perdition to be safe  
When for the Truth he ought to die."

Such is Emerson's ideal of the representative man; one whose chief aim it is to become an image of God, one who is "great from nature;" through whom God's spirit flows unobstructed and who seeks with all his powers God's ends, usefulness with every muscle, and truth

in every thought. (J. II, p. 535). "I admire great men of all classes," he writes, "those who stand for facts, and for thoughts; I like the first Caesar; and Charles V of Spain; and Charles XII of Sweden; Richard Plantagenet; and Bonaparte of France. I applaud a sufficient man, an officer equal to his office; captains, ministers, senators. I like a master standing firm on legs of iron, well-born, rich, handsome, eloquent, loaded with advantages, drawing all men by fascination into tributaries and supporters of his power. Sword and staff, or talents sword-like and staff-like, carry on the work of the world. But I find him greater, when he can abolish himself and all heroes, by letting in this element of reason, irrespective of persons; this subtiliser, and irresistible upward force, into our thought, destroying individualism; the power so great, that the potentate is nothing." This latter is the type of man which Emerson presented in his lectures as representative: with one exception men of thought rather than of action, literary men, philosophers, students of life and men of moral import. Thus Plato, the philosopher—"this eldest Goethe," in whom "intellect is always moral," who gave an "ethico-intellectual expression to every truth;" Swedenborg, the mystic—free from egoism, with depth of moral-insight, though not a pure genius, for "with a force of many men he could never break the umbilical cord which held him to nature, and he did not rise to the platform of pure genius;" Montaigne, the sceptic—the "considerer, the prudent," not merely the doubter; frank, honest, sincere, yet trusting too much in the "suspected and reviled Intellect, to the Understanding, the Mephistopheles, to the gymnastics of talent. . . . . This is hobgoblin the first; and, though it has been the subject of much elegy, in our 19th century, from Byron, Goethe, and other poets of less fame. . . . ."; Shakespeare, the poet, who yet was Shakespeare the player; Napoleon and Goethe, selfish, egoistic, realistic. These

are typical and representative of Emerson's ideal, and yet not purely so, for there is none without his failing. The ideal Christ alone could represent the Spirit in its purer essence. Emerson's selection, however, consisted of men who had a perception of Truth and divined the secret operations of the law of laws.

Goethe's choice of great men was typically different, as was Carlyle's. Goethe admired the man of genius and made no moral qualification. He paid respect to the genius of Napoleon, to the "Dämon," because in its workings he saw the expression of some great natural agency that had to be as it was. Therein he found the essence of all morality for to him naught could be morally sound which was in direct opposition to the laws of nature. And so Carlyle admired the Heroes, "the leaders of men," the modellers, patterns, creators; strong, virile, doers of the deed as well as speakers of the word; not merely receptive and resigned, but active, fighters. Carlyle would have had mankind bow in submission before these larger natures and worship in them the hero. Emerson's individualism is more democratic—great men should be respected and served, but in turn must serve; "great men exist that there may be greater men." Every man is a new creation and for every man there is opportunity. Emerson places his emphasis on an ethical standard: Goethe and Carlyle upon a dynamic one. To Carlyle and Goethe, the great man can not help but be representative of the Ideal: to Emerson, the Idealist only is great and truly representative. Emerson sees man in God. Goethe studies God in man. "Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than any material force, that thoughts rule the world." (Wks. VIII, p. 229).

To Emerson and to most of the English and American critics Goethe represented primarily mind and intellect; in all things the emphasis was placed upon the true and the beautiful. Goethe's mind, it seemed to them,

acted as a court of inquiry in search for truth. He typified intellectual activity, knowledge, wisdom. And in this regard Emerson considered his interest and energy wrongly stressed, for in Emerson's philosophy the good was greater than and inclusive of the true, and the will of equal importance with the intellect. "It is for good, it is to good, that all works. Surely it is not to prove or show the truth of things,—that sounds a little cold or scholastic,—no, it is for benefit that all subsists." Affection blends, he said, intellect disjoins; and he criticised Voltaire as one who "forsook good, aiming at truth, and thus grew up half, or less than half, a man—a colorless plant grown in the dark." A critic in the *Christian Examiner* in 1856, writing doubtless under the influence of the Emerson essays, makes a like distinction. He takes up and compares Goethe and Washington, the one as typifying the genius of intellect, the other that of character, and asks: Which is chief? He estimates a man by the greatness or magnanimity of his soul; not by his power or knowledge, but by his spirit of love. And he says of Goethe: "So we look upon such a one as Goethe, perhaps the greatest sayer of things in this latter age; we read the tale of his life impartially through; we want to like him as much as possible; we examine his conduct and penetrate to the interior spirit from which it springs; and we say to him: we delight in your gifts,—we are very thankful for your astonishing powers,—we gladly allow you your large and masterly place in the world,—we will appreciate and praise God for what is useful and instructive—and very useful and instructive it is—in your kind also,—but pardon us we cannot love you! We reserve our love for him who was a doer (Washington). The genius of character in a great man transcends the genius of intellect." Emerson reflects this same spirit when he notes in the *Journals*, 1864: "It was said lately of Goethe's correspondence with the Duke of Weimar that



the Duke's letters are the best. The experience is familiar day by day, that of two persons, one of character and one of intellect, character will rule and intellect must bow. It is interesting in Goethe's case because of his patronizing tone to all the world." (Wks. VIII, p. 433 and 317).<sup>81</sup>

The idealist always demands the heroic; and this was precisely what the Transcendentalists failed to find in their reading of Goethe. "Unless to Thought is added Will, Apollo is an imbecile," said Emerson, and in another and more famous passage he expressed the same belief:—

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,  
So near is God to Man,  
When Duty whispers low, Thou must,  
The youth replies, I can."

In Goethe they missed the essentially manly, strong, and fearless hero, who was willing to sacrifice his all for the sake of a principle or a moral-good. George Bancroft felt this keenly when he wrote of Goethe in the article of 1824: "He has sketched the sorrows which spring from the imagination, and the evils to which men have become exposed by the vices of refinement. . . . he presents the field of battle at evening, when the weary are returning from the conflicts of life with mangled limbs and heavy hearts. He depicts men driven to helpless despair and suicide by hopeless desire, women languishing from a passion, which their innocence condemns, persons of delicate sensibility brooding over unreal pains, till they turn every object in nature into nutriment for their weakness." Feeling this lack, finding in him counsel and wisdom for all of life's problems, but never the divine spark of inspiration which lifts the soul to new heights and new hopes, Emerson could confess in speaking of the 'Weimarish art friends' to a lack of the heroic and holy in



them, a want of human sympathy—"They do not illuminate me; they do not edify me. Plutarch's heroes cheer, exalt. . . . ." Indeed Goethe the realist presented them with no truly heroic character. He portrayed humanity as he found it or typified its strivings as he saw them, drawing always mainly from his own personal experience. Schiller loves to present an idealist, a visionary, maybe, in his struggle with the realities of life; the conflict in his dramas is always essentially a moral one: as a thorough-going idealist he calls us from the slumbers of sense to a realization of human freedom in the mind and the will.<sup>82</sup> "Werft die Angst des Irdischen von euch! Fliehet aus dem engen, dumpfen Leben in des Ideales Reich!" Ibsen calls upon man to attempt the impossible,<sup>83</sup> and Emerson recommends the counsel—"Always do what you are afraid to do." In Emerson's conception the hero is placed in a war-like attitude to all evil, and thereby he affirms his ability to cope single-handed with an infinite army of enemies and to persist therein. "To this military attitude of the soul we give the name of Heroism. Its rudest form is the contempt for safety and ease, which makes the attractiveness of war. It is a self-trust which slights the restraints of prudence, in the plentitude of its energy and power to repair the harms it may suffer. The hero is a mind of such balance that no disturbances can shake his will; but pleasantly, and as it were merrily, he advances to his own music, alike in frightful alarms and in the tipsy mirth of universal dissoluteness." Heroism is defined as an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual's character. It is obedience to the divine call. "Every heroic act measures itself by its contempt of some external good. But it finds its own success at last, and then the prudent also extol." (Wks. II, p. 250). The hero's pathway is one of health and benefit to mankind, though it lead him to disaster and death personally.

In Goethe's works no "hero" of this exalted type is presented. The disciples of Kant, Emerson and Ibsen, demand the man of action, of self-command and strength of will, not the reflective or vacillating type; but Goethe was too lenient and charitable to humanity. The fault lay in his own nature, for he approached life from an aesthetic standpoint and not as a militant reformer. All of his representative characters are partial projections of his own personality, its longing and distress, its striving and error, its intense humanity. Neither Faust nor Wilhelm Meister can be called in any way heroic in the Emersonian sense. Goethe looked always to the organic growth of the individual nature, which in the course of natural process should blossom forth to ripeness as does the tree or the plant. The freedom of the will in the ideal, by which man overcomes the physical, and which is the hopeful inspiration of Kant and Emerson, and Ibsen and Schiller, is not the central teaching of the Goethean wisdom. "Angstlich aber ist es anzusehen," he says, "wenn ein starker Charakter, um sich selbst getreu zu bleiben, treulos gegen die Welt wird und, um innerlich wahr zu sein, das Wirkliche für eine Lüge erklärt und sich dabei ganz gleichgültig erzeigt, ob man ihn für halstarrig, verstockt, eigensinnig oder für lächerlich halte." But Emerson would bother but little about the opinion of the world about him; truth to self, inner truth must be secured at all hazards. "Heroism is the extreme of individual nature. It feels and never reasons, and therefore is always right. It works in contradiction to the voice of the great and good." Emerson demands always the directly manly. Goethe's strength in his art as an interpreter of mankind is shown at its best in portrayal of feminine rather than masculine characters. He was among the greatest interpreters of woman in literature and represented her in eternal types, but in representation of men he was rather attracted to problematic

natures, such as were temperamentally introspective and complex like Werther, Tasso, Orestes, Eduard, Wilhelm Meister, and Faust. He was not interested in the 'manly' man in the Emersonian sense of the word, and the New England Transcendentalists felt this as one of his chief limitations. True to their inherent nature, they demanded the man whose presence was the source of inspiration and universal enthusiasm, who aroused the admiration of all classes and of all social extremes, the manly idealist and the moral character. Emerson cites Lincoln as "perhaps the most remarkable example of this class that we have ever seen." (Wks. VIII, p. 318). Goethe presents man as he knew him, the striving, the aspiration and the error, the infirmity and the despair, the sorrow and the suffering, of those who yield to individual impulse or obey their own inclination. And by such representation of humanity he teaches the wisdom of self-control, of self-resignation in the conduct of life, and of service for others as the highway to individual happiness. He is always the realist and the "Poet of the Actual," for by means of the comprehension and control of the actual it is that he hopes to attain the Ideal. His sympathies with struggling humanity were too large to permit him to regard in aught but an affectionate and forgiving spirit the waywardness and weakness of his fellowmen. Human-nature, as he knew it, contained too much of the good to be ever utterly bad, and hence he demanded not self-annihilation in the devotion to the Ideal, but rather self-discipline as the means to perfection of character and happiness, and effective and useful labor on the part of the individual as a man among men.

#### IV.—2. THE MISREPRESENTATION OF GOETHE.

Emerson once said, "Our English nature and genius has made us the worst critics of Goethe" (Wks. VIII, p. 69), and thereby showed that he recognized at least to

some extent the limitations of his own critical position. Both as individuals and as members of a larger social—or race—consciousness, the American critics found it impossible, except in a few individual cases, to see in Goethe aught but the representative of a civilization and an age which were foreign to their ideal. Even though they thoroughly agreed with him in many of the larger aspects of thought and prized him as a cosmic-thinker and intellectual genius they could not reconcile this latter with his seeming indifference to more particular moral issues and to what they regarded as the unpardonable paganism of his moral life. They read all sorts of hostile criticism of him, and their misunderstanding naturally took refuge in attitudes of distrust, prejudice, and reproach.

The New Englander regarded the world from the threshold of the Spirit and saw in all things a moral end. The primary criterion in his mind was always, as we have seen, the religious conscience. Civilization in his estimation must be dependent upon moral principle. Goethe observed all things calmly as they were and asked, not to what common end do they exist, or what may we know of them, but, simply, what are these things? So Emerson, the Transcendentalist and Puritan, in his consideration of Goethe naturally asks himself, to what end? What moral purpose has this man's activity on earth served? In how far has he been an instrument of the Divine Will and how has he helped redeem mankind? Emerson judges Goethe from the standpoint of his own extreme religious and moral idealism. His criticism is that of a distinct and original mind and is at the same time the voice of New England Transcendentalism and of the Puritanic American conscience. For Goethe's energy and achievement, his artistic skill and poetic mastery, there are always words of respect and commendation. But in the supreme test of value in man or work, in the moral value, Goethe is almost universally condemned as insuffi-



cient. To these critics he was therefore "right as a genius, wrong as a character; the best instructor in the use of means but not ends;" a realist and man-of-the-world, when he should have been an idealist, a Poet-priest, a Physician of humanity; or, as Margaret Fuller so excellently put it, "plucking flowers and hammering stones instead of looking at the stars."

The judgment of Emerson and American critics of Goethe was partly determined by the current prejudice against the German poet and partly by the absolute standards of their own moral idealism. This explains their misunderstanding of his genius. They made little effort to approach him sympathetically and thus they could not appreciate his point of view. They experienced much the same difficulties that Schiller met with when he first came into personal contact with Goethe and found himself so strangely rebuffed by the latter's apparently calm and patronizing indifference. Schiller, however, in the pursuance of his philosophical studies and his direct intercourse with the elder poet was enabled to overcome his uneasy displeasure and arrive at a sympathetic and friendly understanding of the Goethean genius. Goethe and Schiller came to thoroughly understand one another and although they approached life from different points of view, they found that in their estimation of its prime values they were in mutual agreement.<sup>84</sup> Had the idealist Emerson possessed the opportunity of closer communication with the real Goethe, we believe that his admiration would have been less restricted; and the same is true, indeed, of the greater majority of those moral-idealists who take up the reading of Goethe and find themselves repulsed by his seemingly cold, egoistic, and purely artistic appreciation of nature and humanity. Here, perhaps, lies the explanation of the strange unwillingness of the average American student of literature to pay unconditional homage to Goethe, and for this reason we find him



yielding but too readily to the historical prejudice against the German poet and inclined to accept a mythical Goethe, who, to a great extent, is a product of the misinterpretation of the writers of the Transcendental movement in America.

Emerson found in Goethe no definite and comprehensive system of principles which he could accept as the peculiarly Goethean solution to all the mysteries of nature. Goethe presented him with no stereotyped, teleological explanation of life and nature. He gave a reflection of life as a whole but no explanation of it, no one particular ideal in which and for which all things had their being. To Goethe every object was sufficient unto itself, and in his studies and investigations he sought objectively to understand the nature of each object and thus explain the individual phenomena. This led him in his scientific and aesthetic studies to the idea of the Type as being the essentially permanent bond of unity in the constantly changing world of phenomena, again a characteristically realistic interpretation, unlike the Kantian Ding-an-sich or the Platonic Idea which were idealistic, unattainable, or superior representations of which the empiric world could offer only a poor reflection.<sup>85</sup> Goethe preferred to revere the supernatural as suggested in the natural world, but did not presume to qualify the ever-present mystery by any one specific and thus limiting idea. He did not pretend to solve the "open-secret" but merely to study it. "*Der Mensch ist nicht geboren, die Probleme der Welt zu lösen, wohl aber zu suchen, wo das Problem angeht, und sich sodann in der Grenze des Begreiflichen zu halten. Die Handlungen des Universums zu messen reichen seine Fähigkeiten nicht hin, und in das Weltall Vernunft bringen zu Wollen, ist bei seinem kleinen Standpunkte ein sehr vergebliches Bestreben. Die Vernunft des Menschen und die Vernunft der Gottheit sind zwei sehr verschiedene Dinge.*"<sup>86</sup> Thus Goethe could not make his general

philosophy subservient to ethical teaching; he did not approach nature as did Emerson with a moral premise, but returned from his studies of nature with the firm faith that in her workings was to be discovered the only true and final morality. Emerson, then, and the Transcendental-idealists could and did find in Goethe unlimited range and versatility of genius and wisdom and counsel upon the nature and the conduct of life, and in this respect they paid homage to him as a "recorder," a "sage," and a practical-guide, and were grateful when they found in him "comment and consent" to their own speculation. But it was "lofty flight" not "wide range" that they were looking for, and in Goethe they were able to find no one great, compelling, and all-containing moral ideal, such as they themselves projected, which could inspire them and lift them aloft out of the shackles of sense into the realm of pure spirit. Hence they found him "worldly," a "scholar," and missed in him the priest and the poet.

Emerson, then, failed to appreciate the real Goethe partly because he went to him with his own limited and uncompromising philosophy of life and thus made himself incapable of attaining to any just and adequate conception of the unity of Goethe's activity and thought. He was attracted to him because he was able to find so much of positive worth in him and rebuffed because he found so much which in his own mind he was obliged to reject as of negative and morally harmful import. This was true of the Transcendentalists on the whole, and, indeed, Carlyle himself was at times not entirely immune in this respect. In the conviction of their own moral security and authority lay at once the strength and the weakness of the position of the puritanic critics. It was their own stern and unyielding moral-sense which prejudiced them against Goethe before they were really able to understand and appreciate in him what they themselves sorely needed, namely, tolerance and sympathy for all the things

of life. They were arbitrary in their opinions and stubbornly self-willed, and especially intolerant of whatever was not pleasing to their own taste and fancy. They read themselves into Goethe in so far as they could and when they could go no farther they assumed a hostile attitude. Whatever they could not understand and confirm seemed unworthy and immoral to them and they proceeded to ignore or denounce it. They were keen in their criticism from the point of view of their arbitrary construction but they lacked a calm, objective, and comprehensive knowledge of the man and his work. Their criticism of Goethe is at every step also a criticism of themselves. Emerson himself realized this, when he wrote: "For rightly, every man is a channel through which heaven floweth, and, whilst I fancied I was criticising him, I was censuring or rather terminating my own soul." (Wks. III, p. 242).

In a sense, these American critics of Goethe present a nineteenth-century ethical judgment of the German poet. It is in this respect that the ethical doctrines of such idealists as Emerson, Ibsen, and Tolstoi, stand in contrast to those of Goethe, Shaftesbury, and Spinoza. The mature Goethe teaches social-responsibility, whereas Emerson, Ibsen, and Tolstoi adopt a rather militant attitude against the institutions of society, the latter two in particular advocating social-reform and all three teaching individual responsibility to the Ideal or God. It was the social-reformer, the redeemer, which Follen, echoing the "Young German" criticism, missed in Goethe, and his views, we know, helped to color the New England attitude, whereas the puritanic conscience of New England strongly emphasized man's responsibility to God alone and not to society or to his fellow-man.

The New England critics did not know the real Goethe. They had great difficulties to surmount in their study, and aside from their own arbitrariness of judgment there were other influences abroad in the community

which made an impartial appreciation well-nigh impossible. First of all there were the difficulties of the language and the general hostility to things German and Goethean. We know that Emerson never could read German readily, and an analysis of his critical opinion of the more significant works leads us to conclude that whenever he could obtain a good translation and thus read the work in his own tongue his appreciation of its particular merits and larger significance was always keen and happy and without bitterness. For this reason the "Meister" and the "Tasso" exercised greater appeal to him, and so too perhaps the "Helena" as explained in Carlyle's essay, and the Goethe of Margaret Fuller's translation of Eckermann. "Eckermann was full of fine things and helps very much in the study of Goethe." (J. IV, p. 201). But works of such complexity from a linguistic standpoint as the "Faust" and the "Iphigenie," and the "Wahlverwandtschaften" were doubtless almost sealed books to him. Although he must have known how highly these works were esteemed by those of his friends who were more successful students of the language, writers like Margaret Fuller and F. H. Hedge, he seems to have made scant use of their opinions unless he could verify them himself in his own reading, and this, we feel, was largely unsuccessful without a translation. Collections of aphoristic sayings such as the "Sprüche," were a storehouse of thought to him, and, as it required no sustained effort to penetrate their meaning, were not so difficult of translation.

Moreover, the New Englanders were confronted at the outset by a mythical Goethe who had come to them from over the water in three distinct interpretations. Among his own countrymen the real Goethe was not known and appreciated. The Romanticists had hailed him as the artist and apostle of self-culture, as we have seen, and had ignored or denounced his practical wisdom



and teaching of resignation and service. They lauded in him only what they themselves could accept and commend. Menzel, Follen, and the "Young Germans" on the whole attacked this same Goethe whom the Romanticists had glorified; they decried an art and culture which served no ulterior moral or human purpose, and as they were in part entirely mis-led in their interpretation of Goethe and found only certain phases of his activity and thought emphasized, they vilified him in most bitter terms. The Romanticists had emphasized the aesthetic side of Goethe's life-work and ignored its ethical import; "Young Germany" attacked Goethe the artist and man of culture and failed to find the man of mature ethical judgment and character and practical social teaching. Both of these views of Goethe were, as we have seen, current in New England. And besides there was the prevalent interpretation of Carlyle, who emphasized in Goethe above all the man of wisdom and practical ethical counsel, the teacher and thinker, the poet-sage and man-of-letters, whose primary faculty was intellect and depth and force of vision. Thus three sides of the Goethean genius were presented to the students in New England and each particular point-of-view strongly stressed, but there was no attempt anywhere to ascertain the validity of this criticism and to study Goethe with the intention of finding a unity in his thought and life. Misconception and misunderstanding of this nature have given rise to the Goethe Myth, which still prevails among many educated circles in America.

America knew Goethe the artist, the pagan, and the sage, and the New England critics reflected all three points-of-view, but failed of synthetic construction. They appreciated him according to their own limited vision, and did not see that these three phases of his genius were organically related and stood forth as typical, though partial, expressions of a larger central personality. They were eager to grasp the "wisdom" of Goethe and to hail



him as a sage, because the New Englander and the American, on the whole, placed the utmost value upon education and practical knowledge. But, aside from this, their idealism and severe religious conscience could not understand his larger hellenic spirit, which seemed to them the limited expression of a mere artist and a pagan, of a mind, in short, which they could only regard as lacking in the highest and noblest moral purpose.

Hence we read of Goethe as a man in whom intellect and mind preponderated and in whom character was lacking, a selfish egoist whose aim as an artist did not redound to the highest good of mankind. The intellectual and aesthetic sides were always emphasized, while few critics seem to have felt the deep ethical value of Goethe's works. For the most part they considered him right as a genius, but wrong as a character; a "poetic-artist," not a "prophet-priest;" a scholar and writer, but not a "redeemer." They eagerly read the Goethe of Eckermann and the "Sprüche," where they found the ripened wisdom and counsel of a man whom they regarded as a worldly seer, quietly and impersonally surveying life's vicissitudes and problems, but, except in some few instances such as Margaret Fuller and F. H. Hedge, they were unappreciative of the larger Goethe of the "Iphigenie," the "Wahlverwandschaften," the "Meister," and the "Faust." For this very reason they failed to see that Goethe's final estimate of the values of life, although he arrived at it in an entirely different manner, was very similar to their own, and it was this that led them to grant him, with Menzel-like prejudice, talent but not genius.

From the point-of-view of Goethe scholarship it would be an easy task to cite from the works and correspondence endless examples of Goethe's appreciation of the spiritual values of life, and thus show that Emerson and the Transcendentalists were simply ignorant of this phase of his life and thought. Indeed it would be an interesting

task to examine critically all of the adverse criticism of Goethe, whether Anglo-American or European, and show how in most cases the attitude taken has been, whether consciously or unconsciously, the result of either a misunderstanding or an ignorance of Goethe's character and philosophy. The student would have to deal directly with the great Myth which has grown up about Goethe's name, and has been the result mainly of the opposition to which he has been subjected at the hands of many of his militant and personally prejudiced contemporaries and successors, who knew him only partly and consequently misrepresented him—a Myth which modern Goethe-scholarship has shown to be baseless and misleading. For our purposes, we can only hint at the salient errors of the American critical-attitude, and, with especial attention to Emerson and the Transcendentalists, show in a few words how they misrepresented Goethe; first, as being a sage and purely intellectual; secondly, as a pagan and thus immoral; and thirdly, as a mere artist, selfish, egoistic, and blind to the higher function of poetry and culture in the spiritual life.

Emerson, Theodore Parker, and many others considered Goethe chiefly as being dominated by mind and intellect in constant search for the true and not the good, and we recall the writer in the *Christian Examiner*, and also Emerson in his *Journals*, who presented him as typifying the genius of intellect rather than that of activity and character, and thus showed themselves sadly ignorant of Goethe's fundamental axiom: "*Es ist nicht genug, zu wissen, man muss auch anwenden; es ist nicht genug, zu wollen, man muss auch tun.*" (*Wke.* IV, p. 241). Love and affection were of greater moment and far more vital in the life of every man, contended the New Englanders; affection joins, synthesizes, whereas intellect disjoins and analyzes. But in their reading of Goethe they seem to have failed to note that Goethe in his great

works repeatedly and most firmly placed the emphasis upon this very point as being the central organizing force of our being. Love, he would say, is the very crown of nature<sup>87</sup> and life, the spirit which unites all things and by means of which man is raised aloft to higher being.

"So ist es die allmächtige Liebe,  
Die alles bildet, alles hegt."  
(*"Faust"*—11872-3).

or as aptly expressed in another passage:—

"Was auch als Wahrheit oder Fabel  
In tausend Büchern dir erscheint,  
Das alles ist ein Turm zu Babel,  
Wenn es die Liebe nicht vereint."  
(*Wke. 4, p. 59*).

Emerson counsels us to give all to love, freely and unselfishly, for in love is to be found true being, and Goethe teaches us in the final words of *"Faust"* that man's salvation lies in mighty endeavor permeated by a pure love of humanity. Both poets would agree at once that love is the essentially divine spark in humanity by which man is purified and ennobled, and that in the spiritual purity of its earthly manifestation he ascends to God. Or, as Emerson puts it in the famous lines:

"Heartily know,  
When half-gods go,  
The gods arrive."  
(*Wks. 9, p. 92*).

and Goethe in the *"Divan"* (*Wke. 5, p. 127*):

"Ungehemmt mit heissem Triebe  
Lässt sich da kein Ende finden,  
Bis im Anschauen ew'ger Liebe  
Wir verschwaben, wir verschwinden."

It is only by means of love for and in his work that man can achieve any success, thought Goethe, and it is by virtue of ceaseless striving and labor for a larger un-

selfish end and by divine grace as symbolized in woman's love that Faust is enabled to attain to higher celestial spheres of being. "Die Erde wird durch Liebe frei, Durch Taten wird sie grosz." (Wke. 2, p. 238). The Goethean representation of God in the "Prolog in Himmel" is primarily that of a poet who recognizes the wisdom of love and not the love of wisdom:—

"Doch ihr, die echten Göttersöhne,  
Erfreut euch der lebendig reichen Schöne!  
Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt,  
Umfass' euch mit der Liebe holden Schranken,  
Und was in schwankender Erscheinung schwebt,  
Befestiget mit dauernden Gedanken!"

(Wke. 13, p. 16).

But Emerson, as we have seen, did not appreciate the deeper significance of the "Faust," was more or less familiar with the "Helena" act of the Second Part and judged it as an independent work, and termed the opening angel-choruses of the Prolog "magazine or squirt poetry." He missed entirely its spiritual and optimistic message, finding it disagreeably modern, sceptical, and painfully negative, accusing "the author as well as the times." The pessimistic strains of Faust's early monologues and the Gretchen-tragedy, which he could not judge in its true organic relation to the drama as a whole, undoubtedly offended him and prejudiced him against the work.

The moral depth of the "Iphigenie" too seems to have in no way impressed Emerson. It was to him, as we have seen, a modern-antique and paste-jewel and he evidently preferred the ancient Greek versions. Its spiritual and religious significance passed by unnoticed, even though Margaret Fuller and others drew particular attention to the work in this regard.

To the student of Goethe this seems exceedingly strange and unfortunate, for in none of his works has he appealed more directly to the spirit and soul of human-

life, and none of his works is so completely pervaded by religious piety. If any of Goethe's poems should have appealed to Emerson it is the "Iphigenie," because in it the human soul is bared to God and the principal character, the priestess, with womanly instinct places her trust only in the intuitions of the Spirit. "Ich untersuche nicht, ich fühle nur," says Iphigenie, and of the gods she says: "Sie reden nur durch unser Herz zu uns." In no one of Goethe's larger works do we find a more typically Emersonian spirit. Iphigenie teaches the people over whom she serves as priestess the benevolence of the deity.—

"Denn die Unsterblichen lieben der Menschen  
Weit verbreitete gute Geschlechter,  
Und sie fristen das flüchtige Leben  
Gerne dem Sterblichen, wollen ihm gerne  
Ihres eigenen, ewigen Himmels  
Mitgenießender fröhliches Anschau'n  
Eine Weile gönnen und lassen."

and she has learned the wisdom and virtue of obedience and resignation in harmony with the Divine Spirit:—

"Von Jugend auf hab ich gelernt gehorchen,  
Erst meinen Eltern und dann einer Gottheit,  
Und folgsam fühlt ich immer meine Seele  
Am Schönsten frei....."

Goethe nowhere presents a character more typically heroic in the Emersonian sense than in the person of Iphigenie, and in no work does he express his own religious instinct more firmly and purely. Later in life, in 1827, during the period of his ripest thought and wisdom, he briefly characterized the central theme of the drama in the words:

"Alle menschliche Gebrechen  
Sühnet reine Menschlichkeit."

Of the "Wahlverwandschaften," in which Goethe with great vigor and moral intensity defends the institution of



marriage, Emerson said that its author was the only great writer "who had turned upon the moral conventions and demanded by what right they claimed to control his life," revealing the fact that like most contemporary readers he had failed entirely to understand the moral message which the novel contained. On the whole the Puritanic New Englander firmly believed that the presentation of the immoral in art could have no other than an immoral effect, and hence the consensus of opinion was that the book was dangerous, unsound, and the work of a depraved mind. They did not realize that in this masterly novel Goethe was condemning the license of individual inclination as destructive to social-welfare and demanding moral restraint and resignation on the part of the individual for the sake of the larger good, that in fact he was defending society against the dangers of unrestrained individualism.

Goethe in his mature years firmly defended the basic moral conventions which he deemed necessary for human welfare; perhaps, no man more fully realized their social significance than he himself, for he had not undergone the experiences of a life-time in vain. This side of his nature Emerson did not learn to appreciate. He was too impatient of what to him were Goethe's glaring moral delinquencies to believe that the latter too could in all sincerity assert that man as a moral-being most fully realized the divinity within him. "Alles was sich unter Menschen in höherem Sinne ereignet, musz aus dem ethischen Standt-punkt betrachtet, beschaut, und beurteilt werden." "Wo ich aufhören musz, sittlich zu sein, habe ich keine Gewalt mehr." (Wke. 4, p. 239). From God himself, said Goethe, man derives his moral nature. "Es ist kein Produkt menschlicher Reflexion, sondern es ist angeschaffene und angeborene schöne Natur. Es ist mehr oder weniger den Menschen im allgemeinen angeschaffen, im hohen Grade aber einzelnen ganz vorzüglich begabten

Gemütern. Diese haben durch grosse Taten oder Lehren ihr göttliches Innere offenbart, welches sodann durch die Schönheit seiner Erscheinung die Liebe der Menschen ergriff und zur Verehrung und Nacheiferung gewaltig fortzog."<sup>88</sup> Although the mystical element, which was so predominant in Emerson and the Transcendentalists, asserted itself especially in the later stages of Goethe's life, it was on the whole his conviction also as a realist that man learned to know his divine and moral nature best, not so much in mystic and isolated communion, but in eager and active fulfillment of his duties as a man amongst men. "Wie kann man sich selbst kennen lernen? Durch Betrachten niemals, wohl aber durch Handeln. Versuche, deine Pflicht zu tun, und du weisst gleich, was an dir ist. Was aber ist deine Pflicht? Die Forderung des Tages." (Wke. 4, p. 224). This last, it is true, was one of the principal Goethean teachings which Carlyle especially emphasized, but it was not one that gave the New Englanders particularly spiritual satisfaction. To them it doubtless seemed too practical and worldly, as did the Goethean conception of morality in general.

New England on the whole, we may say, then, accepted and gave credence to the intellectual genius and immoral pagan of the Goethe Myth because it did not know the real Goethe and the unity of his thought, but was too prone to allow this or that fragment of his being to overshadow its interpretation of his larger personality. The essential difficulty was not so much one of appreciation of ethical values as it was one of limitation of scholarship and real critical ability.

As we know Goethe today, he looked to this world and placed his trust in the senses as well as in the spirit for he found them interdependent. The Transcendentalist was of a mystical turn of mind and sought to live purely in the Ideal or God. Goethe possessed the larger conscience of the hellenist; Emerson was never free from

the rigor of puritanism. Emerson, the idealist, is a "father of revolution," for he teaches man to obey only the divine promptings within him and to stand as a non-conformist or antagonist, if need be, among the institutions of social-life. But Goethe, the realist, after the stormy and impetuous titanism of his youth had become spiritually clarified and purified by the richness of artistic and literary labors, was firmly convinced that man comes to completer realization of his intrinsic moral and divine nature through reverential self-resignation and submission to the laws of nature and life and in so doing makes of himself a useful and thus necessary member of the social-group.

"Und dein Streben sei's in Liebe,  
Und dein Leben sei die Tat."

(Wke. 20, p. 52).

The moral-idealists of New England and Young Germany failed to understand the significance of art and aesthetic-culture in Goethe's life and philosophy. In this respect we have heard them condemn him as selfish and egoistic, with no large interest in life, as an apostle of art and self-culture for its own sake. Their attitude toward him was especially bitter and intolerant upon this matter. Emerson once said of Germany's greatest literary men that art, not life, seemed to be the end of all their effort (Wks. XII, p. 255); and in the Journals (III, p. 309) he noted, rather depreciatingly, of Goethe, Carlyle, and Novalis, that they were dear lovers and steadfast-maintainers of the pure ideal morality, "but they worship it as the highest beauty; their love is artistic." Of Goethe in particular he once said, as we have noted: "Self-cultivation is yet the moral of all Goethe has writ." With his limited knowledge of Goethe and German literature he did not know that the crown of Goethean wisdom

was labor and love with reverence and purity of spirit, and that art and aesthetic culture were only a means by which the human spirit might be purged and emancipated and elevated to the divine.

New England inherited no aesthetic tradition, and the Transcendentalist lacked larger opportunity for the study and appreciation of works of art. The stern puritanic conscience looked with open hostility upon the art-world as affording frivolous pleasure and hence as being sinful and godless, and the Transcendentalist had difficulty in overcoming this innate prejudice, laying his emphasis, as we have observed, upon the morally good and useful and valuing the work of art only in so far as it was productive of moral truth and of a religious spirit. Emerson conceived art as being complementary and "subsidiary" to nature. "It differs from the works of nature in that it is not organically reproductive, but spiritually prolific by its powerful action on the intellects of men. The contemplation of a work of art draws us into a state of mind, essentially religious. The great works are always attuned to moral truths."<sup>80</sup> (Wks. VII, p. 3).

In the American colonies on the whole art had to wait upon life; there was a continent to conquer, and a frontier to defend; there were homes to build, and the practical necessities and wants of life demanded immediate and constant attention. Moreover, the inheritance of New England was a religious inheritance, and was imbued with the stern, uncompromising spirit of the Calvinistic Reformation. The Puritan was severe and stoical in temper. His mind subjected itself to a constant self-searching and his thoughts were always fixed upon his duty to God and his own wickedness and sin. He was intolerant of all frivolity and gayety and indulgence-of-self and looked upon even the lesser or milder pleasures in which the human spirit seeks relaxation as promptings of the devil. He allowed himself few books and those were either of



a directly religious or of a morally instructive nature; and the one precious literary heritage which the motherland had given to New England, the Puritan's household book, was the King James Version of the Bible.

We must remember that in New England from the very beginning the church had played the leading role in the community; around it spiritual interests centered, and on the whole we may say that aside from its own functions it filled in New England life the place left vacant by the want of aesthetic culture. The clergy formed in a way a social and intellectual aristocracy. They were the teachers, preachers, and emancipators of thought, and to them the public conscience looked for guidance in all matters of vital concern, whether public or private. The Unitarian spirit was largely the outcome, as we have seen, of the sifting of the philosophy of the Enlightenment through the Puritanic mind, and was in essence practical, utilitarian, and confined to the limits of sense. The literature of this period which was read in New England was formal and didactic. There was an eager interest and faith in education and in all forms of knowledge and learning. The criterion of book or thing was, What does it teach me? What practical or moral instruction does it furnish me, and how am I the better for it? The rise and popularity of periodical literature at this time amply illustrates this point. The purpose of all this periodical literature was in the main moral or philanthropic; it aimed to instruct the public, to lead in educating the people, to furnish useful knowledge and be of larger cultural and moral benefit. Literature and art were not cherished here mainly as affording entertainment or aesthetic enjoyment but for giving instruction in the moral life and the ways of the Spirit.

We have found the Transcendental movement to have been a spiritual reawakening, an attempt on the part of



a few thinkers and leaders to break into a larger emotional and spiritual realm under the growing influence of the European Romantic revolt, but we have also noted that it was under constant restraint and conditioned by the temper and tradition of New England. It was in no way a poetic and literary outburst in the purest sense, but rather an intellectual and spiritual rebirth, religious, philosophic, and scholarly, with the preponderant emphasis placed upon wisdom and the widening of the fields of knowledge and with the direct purpose of moral refinement for the development of culture and of individual character. The active leaders were for the most part members of the clergy, and the medium of expression was not essentially literary or artistic, as poetry, the stage, or the novel, but distinctly religious, as the sermon or the lecture. Emerson, the poet and artist of Transcendentalism, after his resignation from the church, adopted the lecture and the essay as the principal mediums of expression. A sympathetic appreciation of the prominence of the sensuous element in the aesthetic experience was foreign to New England and looked upon with no little aversion, and nowhere does this become more apparent than in the poems and essays of Emerson himself, for although they sparkle with thought, they are in the main rugged and insensible to the subtler niceties of artistic form. He was a true poet of New England and has remained to us truly representative of its temper, which was predominantly spiritual and ethical and not sensuous and aesthetic.

The Transcendental and on the whole the American critic was incapable of seeing the larger synthesis between art and life. There was an inbred hostility to aesthetic pleasure and to all manner of self-indulgence as being idle, selfish, immoral, and in no way directly useful. Spirit and sense were trained to moral restraint and renunciation, not indulgence, and the emphasis was univer-

sally and naturally placed upon the practical and utilitarian arts. The artist was regarded in much the same light as is the poet in Plato's Republic. The New Englander would not yield himself freely and unconditionally to the art-work, but went to it with a conscious purpose of obtaining from it some moral or intellectual benefit. He was trained to resign himself to a religious, but not to an aesthetic, experience; he could not see that in the final analysis both are expressions of our deepest spiritual life. This has especial pertinence, as we have seen, in regard to the New England criticism of Goethe. In him they respected the sage and man of letters for here they found instruction and food for thought, but they misunderstood and attacked the man and the artist for they were incapable on the whole of appreciating the larger world of art and could not understand a man who lived a full and rich life, unhampered by puritanic stringency and a consciousness of sin.

There is much in common between Emerson's views on art and those of the Russian Tolstoi. Both consider art from an ethical point-of-view, placing most value upon the great works of moral teaching, and stress its religious origin and import. Both regard the purely aesthetic as imitative and fraudulent, egoistic and unsound. Emerson wrote: "The reference of all production at last to an aboriginal Power explains the traits common to all works of the highest art,—that they are universally intelligible; that they restore to us the simplest states of mind, and are religious." (Wks. II, p. 358). And Tolstoi in his work, "What is Art," allies art as a means of progress with the religious perception of the age: "The task for Christian Art is to establish brotherly union among men;" and "The subject-matter of Christian art is such feeling as can unite men with God and with one another." Tolstoi satirizes mere aestheticism in most un-

equivocal terms and places most serious emphasis on ethical teaching and religious mysticism; Emerson remains rooted in a religious tradition and condemns an art which seems founded purely on aesthetic pleasure and does not direct us consciously to ethical values. We therefore find both Tolstoi and Emerson arrayed against Goethe the artist.

"But the artist and the connoisseur," said Emerson, "now seek in art the exhibition of their talent, or an asylum from the evils of life. Men are not well pleased with the figure they make in their imaginations, and they flee to art, and convey their better sense in an oratorio, a statue, or a picture. Art makes the same effort which a sensual prosperity makes; namely to detach the beautiful from the useful, to do up the work as unavoidable, and, hating it, pass on to enjoyment. The solaces and compensations, this division of beauty from use, the laws of nature do not permit. As soon as beauty is sought, not from religion and love but for pleasure, it degrades the seeker. High beauty is no longer attainable by him in canvas or in stone, in sound or in lyrical construction; an effeminate, prudent, sickly beauty, which is not beauty, is all that can be formed; for the hand can never execute anything higher than the character can inspire." (Wks. II, p. 336). In men like Emerson and the New Englanders it was the poverty of the aesthetic conscience that made it so hard for them to attain to any unreserved appreciation of the larger art-world of Shakespeare or Goethe. True to their own instinct they looked always for the teacher or the preacher, or the moralist in the work of art. They were self-conscious and felt themselves restricted in the art-world, and much of their prejudice was thus due to blindness, intolerance, and limited scholarship. They could not understand a nature which was naive and self-indulgent, which was capable of sur-

rendering itself freely and unconsciously to sensuous and aesthetic pleasure with never a thought for any immediate good or benefit, which could be wise and moral and at the same time unconcernedly indulgent of self. For such a one was Goethe, a child of nature and of hellenic culture as embodied in the pure teachings of the Renaissance. This seemingly irreconcilable dual nature which they found in Goethe, they could not comprehend. How could a man of such profound wisdom be at the same time a selfish egoist, an immoral pagan, and a maker of "paste-jewels?" Emerson was not a scholar, and he was indifferent to the subtler beauties of aesthetic form; hence we find him inappreciative of Goethe the artist, terming him when especially embittered an apostle of self-culture and an inferior artist whose aim was pleasure and enjoyment and love of ease. And thus we are better prepared to understand why he was led to call modern art as exemplified in Goethe's works egoistic, "artistic," and selfish, and why he venerated in Goethe in particular the writer and man of wisdom.

We have mentioned Schiller as a moral-idealist who in his approach to the genius of Goethe and also of Shakespeare encountered many of the same difficulties with which Emerson had to contend, but was able to meet and surmount them and live during the last years of his life in a relation of spiritual companionship with and almost brotherhood to Goethe. Schiller spent his life in an environment where the aesthetic tradition was an inheritance. He was born a dramatist rather than a preacher although we are told that as a boy he showed considerable promise of a possible future career in the latter field of activity. The medium of thought-expression which he found ready and most suitable to his nature was that of the drama and not as with Emerson that of the

pulpit and platform. Thus his whole life was spent in aesthetic labors, whether as a philosopher or creator, and in this respect there was open to him an avenue by means of which he could approach to a sympathetic understanding of the Goethean genius.

As a philosopher Schiller's aim was to find the function of art in life. He was a clear and manly thinker, and his philosophy is one of practical application to human-welfare and development. He starts out from Kant and seeks to bring into harmony the Kantian conception of inclination and duty which are to him opposite and irreconcilable poles. His goal is the moral-perfection of mankind, and he finds this realized in what he terms the beautiful-soul or completed-man, in whom all strife between the eternal Moral-law and individual desire has ceased and in whom inclination becomes one with duty. To him art and aesthetic-culture present the one important process by which this end is to be attained; they furnish a means to the moral-perfection of man;

"Die Kunst, O Mensch, hast du allein.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nur durch das Morgenthor des Schönen  
Drängst du in der Erkenntnis Land,  
An höhern Glanz sich zu gewöhnen,  
Ubt sich am Reize der Verstand.  
Was bei dem Saitenklang der Musen  
Mit süßem Beben dich durchdrang,  
Erzog die Kraft in deinem Busen,  
Die sich dereinst zum Weltgeist schwang."

Schiller and Goethe agree fundamentally in their ideas of the place of art in life. Schiller arrived at his conclusions by the processes of reasoning, whereas Goethe relied largely upon his experience and intuition, although



he was by no means indifferent to aesthetic speculations, as we find aptly evidenced in his correspondence with the younger poet. Goethe accepted in the large the results of Schiller's speculations as embodied in the "Aesthetic Letters" and the "Naive and Sentimental Poetry," and he wrote to Schiller,—Oct. 26, '94,—". . . . .so waren mir diese Briefe angenehm und wohltätig, und, wie sollte es anders sein, da ich, was ich für Recht seit langer Zeit erkannte, was ich teils lebte, teils zu leben wünschte, auf eine so zusammenhängende und edle Weise vorgetragen fand!" Years later, after Schiller's death, Goethe paid a beautiful tribute to the nobility of his friend's character and their mutual conviction of the purifying and spiritualizing power of the aesthetic experience in his "Epilog zu Schiller's Glocke":—

"Denn er war unser! Mag das stolze Wort  
Den lauten Schmerz gewaltig übertönen!  
Er mochte sich bei uns, im sichern Port,  
Nach wildem Sturm zum Dauernden gewöhnen.  
Indessen schritt sein Geist gewaltig fort  
Ins Ewige des Wahren, Guten, Schönen,  
Und hinter ihm, in wesenlosem Scheine,  
Lag, was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine."

(Wke. I, p. 283).

Emerson too, we remember, calls for the complete man, the larger personality, but he does not tell us definitely how he is to be produced. With the true instinct of the mystic, he advises us to yield to divine intuitions and thus grow in the power of the soul; but the whole conception is vague and he gives us no practical suggestions of the process by which such an end is to be attained. Governments, he says, have their origin in the moral identity of men, and it is their aim to produce the

man of character and to educate the wise man. "The highest end of government is the culture of men." (Wks. III, p. 204). He realizes that the moral character of the individual citizen is fundamental to any betterment in the character of government; "The state must follow, and not lead the character and progress of the citizen."—"The appearance of character makes the state unnecessary. The wise man is the state." So too Schiller tells us: "Alle Verbesserung im Politischen soll von Veredlung des Charakters ausgehen." Both men<sup>90</sup> agree as to the end to be attained which is moral character by means of education and culture, but they are the children of their respective thought-environments in their ideas concerning the nature of culture and the production of character. Emerson in accord with the religious tradition of New England teaches that the source of all true culture and character lies in absolute reliance upon the Moral-sentiment and resignation to the will of God. Thereby it is that the latent powers of the soul are called into being. Schiller the thinker and Goethe the poet teach us that it is the function of art and of aesthetic culture to produce the harmonious being and the man of character and thus to serve as a means to the regeneration of the social state. Wherein Emerson is vague, mystical, indefinite, and transcendental, Schiller and Goethe are essentially tangible and practical in doctrine. They present in turn a distinctly ethical advance upon the cultural ideals of Shaftesbury and also of the German Romantics, and give a more definite solution than Emerson's reliance upon complete abandonment and devotion to the Spirit, which is an expression of the mystical nature of his transcendental philosophy. In Schiller and Goethe we approach the highest moral values of life from the point of view of art; in Emerson we are always led back finally to an essentially religious experience.

Goethe ably expresses his conviction in the moral worth and benefit of art in his lines (Wke. 9, p. 297):—

“Denn das ist der Kunst Bestreben,  
Jeden aus sich selbst zu heben,  
Ihn dem Boden zu entführen;  
Link und Recht musz er verlieren  
Ohne zauderndes Entsagen;  
Aufwärts fühlt er sich getragen!

\* \* \* \* \*

Wer empfing der möchte geben.  
In der Himmelsluft der Musen  
Offnet Busen sich dem Busen,  
Freund begegnet neuem Freunde,  
Schlieszen sich zur All-Gemeinde,  
Dort versöhnt sich Feind dem Feinde.

\* \* \* \* \*

Die Kunst versöhnt der Sitten Widerstreit,  
In ihren Kreisen waltet Einigkeit.  
Was auch sich sucht und flieht, sich liebt und haszt,  
Eins wird vom andern schicklich angefaszt.....”

Social-service is the practical aim, then, of self-culture in the Goethean sense, and in this regard Emerson and the majority of the New England critics sadly misunderstood its concrete application in the “Faust” and the “Meister.” Traditional and environmental restrictions prevented them from appreciating the fact that according to Goethe art was a means by which mankind could approach to highest spiritual attainment. Few of them understood the real significance of the “Wanderjahre” and the Faust-drama as a whole, and knew the real Goethe. Novalis had criticised the “Meister,” as we have noted, for he found that it made art and culture subsidiary to the service of humanity; but the Romantics glorified art, and of the “Meister” knew only the “Lehrjahre,” where self-culture is emphasized. The “Wanderjahre” and the Second Part of “Faust” which contain the conclusions of the Goethean thought had not

as yet appeared. Hence they were largely ignorant of the importance of this greater ideal in Goethe's philosophy and stressed his teaching of self-culture as the basis for their view of life. Accepting in the main their interpretation, the social and moral idealists of "Young Germany" were able to see in Goethe only the aesthete and egoist, cold, proud, selfish, and self-sufficient. And as the New Englanders, though in close touch philosophically with the Romantic Renaissance, had no aesthetic tradition to open up to them any adequate conception of the true place of art in life, they judged Goethe on the one hand as the supreme Artist, whose main purpose in life was self-culture, for so the Romanticists had hailed him. On the other hand like "Young Germany" they denounced him as immoral, egoistic, a man of talent but not genius, "artistic but not artist," because they failed to find a higher purpose in his thought and labor at all compatible with their own unrelenting puritanic conscience.

In the American criticism of Goethe there was a line of division constantly drawn between Goethe's mind and his moral worth. Emerson and others appreciated and derived much comfort from the sage and scholar, the man of intellect and wisdom, but they had only words of censure for the apostle of aesthetic culture. They saw only one side at a time and could not connect the two, for they did not see the synthesis between aesthetic-culture and life in the Goethean philosophy, and did not realize that only by continually enriching his own mind and personality, was the poet at all able to assimilate and become master of the wide culture and wisdom, which they applauded and prized. They failed to note that with Goethe self-culture was a means to wisdom and purer being, and that these latter were in turn valid only when put to some larger humanitarian and altruistic purpose. For this is the message which Goethe brings us in his great works,

in the "Wanderjahre" more particularly and the Second Part of "Faust," but nowhere does it receive better illustration than in the life of the poet himself. It is the function of the Helena-act of the "Faust"—which the New England critics were on the whole able to treat only as an independent piece—to introduce Faust into the realm of purest beauty and subject him to the ennobling influences of aesthetic culture, that he may thereby be spiritually chastened and instilled with the virtue of highest moral endeavor. Nothing more plainly illustrates this than the words of Phorkyas, counselling Faust to hold firmly to the garments and veil of Helena, as her physical form vanishes from his embrace:—

"Halte fest, was dir von allem übrig blieb.

\* \* \* \* \*

Die Göttin ist's nicht mehr, die du verlierst,  
Doch göttlich ist's. Bediene dich der hohen,  
Unschätzbar'n Gunst und hebe dich empor:  
Es trägt dich über alles Gemeine rasch  
Am Ather hin, so lange du dauern kannst."

(Faust—9945).

Enveloped by the garments of Helena, Faust is symbolically borne aloft to higher purposes, and when we next meet him he is filled with new strength and courage and a desire to act and be of service in the world. To him now, "Genieszen macht gemein," as he says, and he turns to useful, altruistic action.

"Mit nichten! dieser Erdenkreis  
Gewährt noch Raum zu groszen Taten.  
Erstaunenswürdiges soll geraten,  
Ich fühle Kraft zu kühnem Fleisz." (1081.)

And just as Helena had brought new life to Faust and left him ennobled, so the Italian Journey (1786-1788) marks an epoch in Goethe's career. During the years after his return to Weimar he became in a sense a new



being, clarified and purified in spirit and conscious of the responsibilities and higher aims which were given him in life. Now he was able to accommodate himself harmoniously and freely and without constraint to his duties as a useful and active member of society. Henceforth this becomes the gist of his message to humanity, and he clearly expressed this new feeling of obligation in his words to Riemer (May 19, 1809):—"Indessen mache ich Ihnen zur Pflicht and Selbstbeherrschung, ja an Selbstständigkeit zu denken und sich nach einem Amte umzusehen, deren manche Sie mit Ehren bekleiden könnten und geschähe es nur um die Überzeugung bei Sich zu nähren: dasz in jeder Lage des Lebens eine bestimmte Thätigkeit von uns gefordert wird und dasz wir nur in sofern für etwas gelten als wir den Bedürfnissen anderer auf eine regelmässige und zuverlässige Weise entgegenkommen."

Now too, Goethe became convinced of the responsibility and sacredness of his mission as a poet. For him, as for Faust, the new watchword was: "Die Tat ist alles, nichts der Ruhm;" and with keen sensibility of his duty both to himself and to his fellow-men he answers the Muse of poetry in the "Zueignung" with the words:—

"Ein froher Wille lebt in meinem Blut,  
Ich kenne ganz den Wert von deinen Gaben.  
Für andre wächst in mir das edle Gut,  
Ich kann und will das Pfund nicht mehr vergraben!  
Warum such ich den Weg so sehnsuchtsvoll.  
Wenn ich ihn nicht den Brüdern zeigen soll?"

(Wke. I, p. 5).

## CHAPTER V.

### CONCLUSION.

We have found Emerson's admiration for Goethe to have been indeed genuine in so far as it went, though we must always remember that it was, as he himself said, "a qualified admiration." It reflects excellently the spirit of the contemporary American opinion, and it has exerted great influence in general upon the American mind.

What the American esteemed most in Goethe was the many-sidedness of the man's genius, his love of truth, his industry and brilliant achievement, his mastery in the many fields of knowledge which distinguished his age, his poetic ability, and the artistic insight which enabled him better than any contemporary to read the old riddle of nature for the modern age. It was the scholar, the writer, and the philosopher, to whom the student in them paid respect and homage. With Carlyle they marvelled at his rich culture and universality of mind; but they were repelled by what they conceived to be his immoral character and devotion to self-culture for its own sake; from the artist and selfish egoist, as they termed him, from him of the Olympian complacency, of the "velvet-life" and courtly ease, the puritan and the democrat in them turned in disdain. They did not know the true Goethe; they were influenced by the Romantic and "Young German" misrepresentations, and in turn themselves enlarged upon the Goethe Myth. They looked for the priest and found only the poet, for they had no aesthetic tradition and training by which to approach him more sympathetically and thus find in him what they desired above all

things—the poet-priest. Genius of moral character was to the New Englander true greatness, and applying this standard to Goethe in a false light and unfriendly spirit, they misjudged him and found him wanting. "He might have been a priest," said Margaret Fuller, "he is only a sage." To Theodore Parker he was "an Artist, not a Man," and so too, Alcott records: "Ah! could he but have found himself in the One, whom, with such surpassing skill he individualized, but failed to impersonate. His aloofness from life, his residence in the Many, his inability to identify himself with the whole of things—this duplicity of genius denied him free admittance to unity. Cunning he was, not wise in the simplicity of wisdom." They regarded him as the great example of self-culture, and therein they found him a great "Pagan," one who through his own inclination had cut himself off from the highest attainment of Christian character. All the American criticism, with one or two exceptions, was of such tenor, and Emerson's, as we have seen, was a voice raised to pronounce judgment in the same lofty spirit and from a like turn-of-mind.

In Emerson we have a splendid type of the moral-idealist, and we find his attitude toward Goethe typical of the idealistic mind. Emerson was primarily a moral-teacher and friend of those who would dwell in the world of the Spirit, a spiritual-emancipator, but himself the most reserved of men. In his speculative interests he stands related to the Romantic revolt, but he differs from it as the philosophy of New England Transcendentalism differed from that of German Romanticism. Like Goethe he exercised a control over himself and remained a man among men, with an eye to the practical and the useful, though never in a sordid sense. The Romantic-idealist was largely a visionary and a dreamer; his activity was short and scattered, though brilliant and on the whole of inestimable value. Emerson found the practical in the

Ideal and taught its ethical values, self-control and self-resignation in the ways of the Spirit. Goethe remained always the master of his thought and intuition, sane, sensible, balanced, "a healthy mind," conservative, steeling his turbulent nature in resignation to the ways of life, and seeking to fit himself into his proper place in the social-order. Goethe's effort is primarily that of the artist to accommodate himself to the world; Emerson's is that of the preacher and man-of-religion.

In this regard one can not well isolate Emerson's critical opinions, for although fundamentally they were the views of one distinct and original mind they were in a larger aspect expressive of the temper of New England, or better, of American idealism. During those years when he was deeply engaged in the reading of German books and of Goethe, he was also in constant touch with other students; he was under the inspiring influence of Carlyle, whose enthusiasm for Goethe was contagious; and he was a reader of the best in the contemporary periodical literature. Bancroft, Follen, Longfellow, Parker, Alcott, to mention only a few, thought that they judged Goethe with full justice from an idealistic point-of-view, whereas in reality their knowledge was based upon a very limited and distorted and oftentimes highly and unconsciously prejudiced estimate of the poet. It is little wonder then that in Emerson we find reflected much of their praise and censure.

If we were to ask, in what respect Emerson's criticism of Goethe differed from that of his contemporaries, we should say that it differed as the individual Emerson differed from them. It had a calm and even tone and in its public utterances was never lacking in dignity. It was always that of a thoughtful and careful mind, testing its object by highest aim and measure. It always aimed at fundamentals and never satisfied itself with superficialities and platitudes. On the whole it tried to



be just, and it always has the ring of sincerity and truth. It was more distinctly intellectual and lacked the warmth and sympathy of that of Margaret Fuller, the vehemence and virility of Theodore Parker, and the aesthetic appreciation of Bancroft and Hedge and Calvert, as it lacked the vigorous enthusiasm of Carlyle and the merciless sting of the Calvinistic reactionaries. It was primarily an appreciation of the "wisdom" of Goethe, and was indifferent to the aesthetic beauty and artistic quality of the poetic works and missed their intrinsic moral message. Perhaps nothing is better illustrative of what Emerson appreciated and failed to appreciate in Goethe than the words on the "Meister" in the Essay in "Representative men" (Wks. IV, p. 278), where he speaks of its delicious sweetness, its many and solid thoughts and just insights into life and manners and characters, its good hints for the conduct of life and unexpected glimpses into a higher sphere, and then almost in the same breath reveals that he was oblivious to the moral and social significance of the work by characterizing its conclusion as lame and immoral. Emerson valued Goethe's sincerity and truth as a genius, his self-reliance and sterling individuality, but in the works he looked for the spiritual and not the sensuous thrill. Following Carlyle he sought an historical perspective and placed Goethe beside Napoleon as one of the two greatest men of the age, thus enabling Hermann Grimm at a later date to write: "Although I grew up in the study of Goethe, and had had such intercourse with those who have known him personally, I am indebted to Emerson for the historical view of Goethe, which taught me to regard him as the great phenomenon in the universal development of mankind."<sup>91</sup>

In our examination of Emerson's critical opinion of Goethe we have found that from the point-of-view of individual character it was distinctly that of the moral idealist and ethical teacher passing judgment upon the



realist and artist. From the point-of-view of the historical environment it reflected the American sentiment on the whole and the attitude of the New England Transcendentalists in particular. Philosophically it was akin to the critical views of the German Romanticists and ethically and from a practical standpoint it had considerable in common with the criticism of "Young Germany." It was an understanding and justification of only one phase of Goethe's genius, and its limitations lay in the nature of its own restricted and unyielding temper and in the aggressive anti-Goethe sentiment which prevailed in the community and was not confined to New England.

But when we stop to consider the meagreness of the material which the Transcendental and American critics possessed in their pursuance of the study of Goethe and the many difficulties, linguistic and other, which they had to overcome, we are astonished at the intelligence of their judgment. Some of their statements are still superior to any later criticism of Goethe from an American hand, as for instance, those of Emerson himself, of Margaret Fuller, of Hedge, Calvert, George Bancroft's first article in 1824, and the article in the *New York Review* of 1839; and what they said of him was indeed equal, if not superior, to any contemporary continental statement. We must remember that their study ceased long before the opening of the Goethe-archives and the foundation of systematic and scientific Goethe-scholarship, which have done so much to bring about a better understanding of the great poet and man. The influence of their criticism, in particular that of Emerson, is still felt in America to-day, because, perhaps, it is so truly American and so well reflects the American critical temper. For the seeds which Emerson sowed have taken firm root in our American soil, and it is to him that we turn for the expression of that moral-idealism which has ever been a characteristic of the American mind.

## I.—NOTES.

### CHAPTER I. PHASES OF THE ROMANTIC REVOLT.

*General Works:* O. B. Frothingham, "Transcendentalism in New England"; H. C. Goddard, "Studies in New England Transcendentalism"; Memorial History of Boston (IV., p. 295-330); Emerson, "The Transcendentalist" (Wks. I.); and "Historic Notes of Life in New England" (Wks., vol. X.); J. F. Clarke, "Nineteenth Century Questions"; etc.

<sup>1</sup>(p. 19). See J. F. Clarke, "Nineteenth Century Questions" (Emerson), p. 272-73; and also Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings, 2nd series, vol. 2, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>(p. 22). See O. B. Frothingham, "George Ripley," American Men of Letters Series, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>(p. 22). See John W. Chadwick, "W. E. Channing," p. 351.

<sup>4</sup>(p. 23). See H. C. Goddard, "Studies in New England Transcendentalism," p. 58.

<sup>5</sup>(p. 24). See J. F. Clarke, "Autobiography," p. 38-39.

<sup>6</sup>(p. 25). See J. F. Clarke, "Nineteenth Century Questions," p. 166. Contrasting Carlyle and Emerson (see Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings, 2nd series, vol. 2, p. 159), Clarke writes: "Neither could found a school of thought, but each was an inspiration to his time. Each was a prophet; but Carlyle was a prophet like John the Baptist, a Voice crying in the Wilderness. Emerson was a prophet of light and love overcoming evil with good, dispelling darkness with light, and always comforting our souls by announcing that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand."

<sup>7</sup>(p. 25). "Carlyle's 'Life of Schiller' opened the portals of German literature and made an epoch in biography and criticism. ....He wrote of Goethe, Schiller, Richter, Burns, Novalis, even Voltaire, with reverence....for the divine element in each." (J. F. Clarke, "Nineteenth Century Questions," p. 166-176.)

<sup>8</sup>(p. 28). Perhaps no one has given a better statement of the characteristics and purposes of the Transcendental Movement than W. H. Channing in his portion of the M. Fuller Memoirs (vol. II., p. 12 ff): "Transcendentalism was an assertion of the inalienable integrity of man, of the immanence of Divinity in instinct. In part, it was a reaction against Puritan Orthodoxy: in part, an effect of renewed study of the ancients, of Plato and the Alexandrians, of Plutarch's Morals. Seneca, and Epictetus: in part, the natural product of the culture of the place and time.

On the somewhat stunted stock of Unitarianism—whose characteristic dogma was trust in individual reason as correlative to Supreme Wisdom—had been grafted German Idealism, as taught by masters of most various schools—by Kant and Jacobi, Fichte and Novalis, Schelling and Hegel, Schleiermacher and DeWette, by Mme. de Stael, Cousin, Coleridge, and Carlyle; and the result was a vague yet exalting conception of the godlike nature of the human spirit. Transcendentalism, as viewed by its disciples, was a pilgrimage from the idolatrous world of creeds and rituals to the temple of the Living God in the Soul. . . . Amidst materialists, zealots, and sceptics, the Transcendentalist believed in perpetual inspiration, the miraculous power of the will, and a birth-right to universal good. . . . His maxims were: 'Trust, dare and be; infinite good is ready for your asking; seek and find. All that your fellows can claim or need is that you should become, in fact, your highest self; fulfil, then, your ideal.'"

#### GOETHE AND THE ROMANTICISTS.

In general, see books of Walzel, Boucke, Siebeck, Harnack, Haym, Meyer, and Bielschowsky, as listed in the bibliography.

<sup>9</sup>(p. 36). See Novalis Wrke., Bong and Co. (Deutsches Verlagshaus, Berlin), *Fragmente* 1354 and 1286.

In the words, "Künstlerischer Atheismus," Novalis well characterizes the "Meister" from the romantic point-of-view, for the Romanticists were devotees of art and culture for their own sake, whereas Goethe looked to the larger goal of human and social welfare. They were acquainted with and glorified the "Lehrjahre" (1797) and "Faust I." (1808); the "Wanderjahre" (1821) and "Faust II." (1832), where the synthesis of the Goethean philosophy of life is given, appeared after their important activities had ceased.

#### CHAPTER II. GOETHE IN NEW ENGLAND.

In general: Goethe Jahr Buch V., 219 ff; article on Goethe in America by H. S. White; S. H. Goodnight, Wisconsin Publications, vol. 4, "German Literature in American Magazines Prior to 1846"; and H. C. Goddard, "New England Transcendentalism."

<sup>10</sup>(p. 38). See Goodnight, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>(p. 39). See Goodnight, p. 22-26.

<sup>12</sup>(p. 39). See Goodnight, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup>(p. 42). See Goethe Jahr Buch, vol. 25, p. 3 f., "Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Amerikanern."

<sup>14</sup>(p. 43). The influence of the statements of Menzel, Follen, and Ware is now plainly perceptible.

<sup>15</sup>(p. 44). See Goethe *Jahr Buch V.*, p. 219 ff.

<sup>16</sup>(p. 44). See Follen's Works (Hilliard, Gray and Company, Boston, 1842, 5 volumes). Vol. 4, p. 382-387.

<sup>17</sup>(p. 45). Carlyle's principal essays on German literary subjects and translations from the German appeared in the following order.

- (1) "Life of Schiller" (London Mag., 1823-24), 1825, 1845.
- (2) "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship," 1824.
- (3) "Jean Paul" (Edinburgh Review), 1827.
- (4) "German Literature" (Edinburgh Review), 1827.
- (5) Goethe's *Helena* (Foreign Review), 1828.
- (6) Goethe (Foreign Review), 1828.
- (7) German Playwrights (Foreign Review), 1829.
- (8) Voltaire (Foreign Review), 1829.
- (9) Novalis (Foreign Review), 1829.
- (10) Signs of the Times (Edinburgh Review), 1829.
- (11) Richter (Foreign Review), 1830.
- (12) Schiller (Fraser's Mag.), 1831.
- (13) Characteristics (Edinburgh Review), 1831.
- (14) Goethe's Portrait (Fraser's Mag.), 1832.
- (15) Death of Goethe (New Monthly Mag.), 1832.
- (16) Goethe's Works (Foreign Quarterly Review), 1832.
- (17) "Novelle," transl. from Goethe (Fraser's Mag.), 1832.
- (18) "The Tale," by Goethe (Fraser's Mag.), 1832.
- (19) "Sartor Resartus," 1833-34 (Fraser's Mag.), 1835 (Boston).

(20) "Heroes and Hero Worship," 1841.

<sup>18</sup>(p. 46). See Carlyle, "Heroes and Hero Worship." Lect. 5, "Hero as Man of Letters."

<sup>19</sup>(p. 46). Carlyle, Essay, "Goethe."

<sup>20</sup>(p. 47). Carlyle, Essay, "Goethe's Works."

<sup>21</sup>(p. 47). Carlyle, Essay, "Death of Goethe."

<sup>22</sup>(p. 47). Carlyle, Essay, "Goethe's Portrait."

<sup>23</sup>(p. 47). See Wordsworth's prose works, vol. III., p. 436 ff. Also A. Brand's "S. T. Coleridge and the English Romantic School," p. 305.

<sup>24</sup>(p. 48). See J. F. Clarke, "Nineteenth Century Questions," essay on "The Two Carlyles."

<sup>25</sup>(p. 48). See Emerson-Carlyle Correspondence, I.; Letter of Emerson to Carlyle, May 14, 1834.

The warm reception which was accorded Carlyle's writings in New England is shown by the fact that this was the first edi-



tion of the "Sartor" published either in England or America. Emerson in his first letter to Carlyle wrote (1834): "Like Somebody in 'Wilhelm Meister,' I said: This person has come under obligations to me and to all whom he has enlightened. . . . You are dispensing that which is rarest, namely, the simplest truths . . . . which lie next to consciousness, and which only the Platos and Goethes peruse."

<sup>26</sup>(p. 48). See Emerson-Carlyle Correspondence, I., p. 183. See also Carlyle's reply, I., p. 189.

<sup>27</sup>(p. 49). Emerson-Carlyle Correspondence, I., 231.

<sup>28</sup>(p. 50). For the attitude of Menzel and Young Germany on the whole, see: G. Brandes, "Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature" (vol. 6, "Young Germany"); J. Prölss, "Das Junge Deutschland" (Stuttgart, Cotta, 1892); von Noé, "Goethe und das Junge Deutschland" (Chicago, 1910); R. M. Meyer, "Wolfgang Menzel" (Die Nation, XV., p. 546 f. and 562 f.); R. M. Meyer, "Deutsche Literatur des 19 Jahrhunderts," I., p. 59.

For characteristic statements, see Gutzkow's essay, "Über Goethe im Wendepunkte Zweier Jahrhunderte," 1835; and Heine's various polemical articles, as those against Menzel, also the first book of the "Romantische Schule." It is interesting to note that in 1836 G. W. Haven's translation from Heine, "Letters auxiliary to the History of Modern Polite Literature in Germany" (J. Monroe & Co.), appeared, and doubtless made Heine's attitude toward Goethe known to some extent at least in America. The work was reviewed in the periodicals—see North American Review, XLIII., 1836.

<sup>29</sup>(p. 54). See Goodnight, p. 74 f.

<sup>30</sup>(p. 56). Ware's article is a review of Dwight's book of translations from the lyrics of Goethe and Schiller, and appeared in George Ripley's series (vol. 3); the criticism is a glorification of Schiller at Goethe's expense.

<sup>31</sup>(p. 57). See Thomas W. Higginson, "Henry W. Longfellow," p. 127 (American Men of Letters).

<sup>32</sup>(p. 58). See Chadwick's biography of Channing (Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 207 and p. 371.

<sup>33</sup>(p. 58). See O. W. Holmes, "Emerson," p. 79.

<sup>34</sup>(p. 58). For complete statement of Margaret Fuller's relation to Goethe, see the work of F. A. Braun, "Margaret Fuller and Goethe" (Henry Holt & Co., N. Y., 1910). Also her two articles which originally appeared in the Dial, but have been re-issued in her book, "Life Within and Life Without." (1) "Menzel's View of Goethe"; and (2) "Essay on Goethe" (1841). Of the latter F. H. Hedge said: "So far as it goes, it is one of the



best criticisms extant on "Goethe." (See M. Fuller's *Memoirs*; I. p. 96; N. Y. Tribune Association, 1869; 2 vol.)

Emerson said of her that Goethe nowhere found a braver, more intelligent, and more sympathetic reader. "The religion, the science, the catholicism, the worship of art, the mysticism and daemonology, and withal the clear recognition of moral distinctions as final and eternal, all charmed her." (*Memoirs*: I., p. 243.) "Margaret was one of the few persons who looked upon life as an art, and every person not merely as an artist but as a work of art." (*Memoirs*; II., p. 238.) Herein, perhaps, lies the secret of her sympathetic and intelligent appreciation of Goethe's genius.

<sup>35</sup>(p. 60). For Parker's attitude, see: J. Weiss, "Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker" (D. Appleton & Co., N. Y.), 1864, 2 vol.: Vol. II., p. 20 ff. O. B. Frothingham, "Life of Theo. Parker" (Houghton, Osgood & Co.), 1879, p. 108-109.

Emerson's beautiful tribute to Parker (Wks., X., p. 344) throws considerable light upon his personality and hence enables us to better appreciate his critical attitude toward Goethe. "Theodore Parker was our Savonarola, an excellent scholar, in frank and affectionate communication with the best minds of his day, yet the tribune of the people, and the stout Reformer to urge and defend every cause of humanity with and for the humblest of mankind. He was no artist. Highly refined persons might easily miss in him the element of beauty. What he said was mere fact, almost offended you, so bald and detached; little cared he. He stood altogether for practical truth; and so to the last. He used every day and hour of his short life, and his character appeared in the last moments with the same firm control as in the midday of strength."

<sup>36</sup>(p. 61). See "Concord Days" (Roberts Bros., Boston, 1872), p. 157-160.

<sup>37</sup>(p. 62). See *North American Review*, vol. 51, p. 525.

### CHAPTER III. EMERSON AND GOETHE.

<sup>38</sup>(p. 66). "Emerson in Concord," by Edw. W. Emerson, p. 54. (*Journals*, Nov. 15, 1834.)

<sup>39</sup>(p. 68). Cabot, "Memoirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson," I., p. 139.

<sup>40</sup>(p. 68). J. B. Thayer, "Western Journey," p. 87.

<sup>41</sup>(p. 70). To the student and admirer of Emerson's genius it appears indeed strange and unhappy that the editors of the Centenary Edition did not include this poem in the volume of

poetic output (IX.). Although crude and rugged in form from an æsthetic standpoint, the poem has importance, for it ably and tersely expresses the essential tenets of Emerson's ethical doctrine, and regarded historically, has significance in the study of the nature of Emerson's poetic genius. Other poems which have appeared now in the Journals, such as those which commemorate his love for his first wife, Ellen, and are more distinctly personal and human, now tender and playful, and then after her death calm with the dignity of resignation and grief (see J., II., 257 and 265; also June, 1831, and July, 1831), certainly deserve a place in any future edition of Emerson's poems which aims to be definitive and complete.

<sup>42</sup>(p. 73). Thus we find quotations of the following nature: *Novalis* (per Carlyle):

"There is a secret attraction towards all points, from within us, diverging from an infinitely deep centre."

"Character is a perfectly educated will." (J., II., p. 349.)  
*Schiller* (Coleridge's transl. of "Wallenstein"):

- (1) "In your own bosom are your destiny's stars;  
Confidence in yourself, prompt resolution,  
That is your Venus! and the sole malignant,  
The only one that harmeth you, is Doubt."
- (2) "The Oracle within him, that which lives,  
He must invoke and question—not dead books,  
Not ordinances, not mould-rotted papers."
- (3) "Of its own beauty is the mind diseased  
And fevers into false creation." (J., April 25, 1831.)

### *Goethe:*

We find pasages taken directly from Carlyle's essays and "Meister," and from Mrs. Austin's "Characteristics" (3 vol.; London, Effingham Wilson, 1833), and others:

(1) "If I wished to find some real inspiration, some profound sentiment, some just and striking reflexions for my poetical compositions, I saw that I must draw them from my own bosom." "Memoirs" (J., II., 348).

(2) "I, for my share, cannot understand how men have made themselves believe that God speaks to us through books and histories. The man to whom the universe does not reveal directly what relation it has to him—whose heart does not tell him what he owes himself and others—that man will scarcely learn it out of books, which generally do little more than give our errors names." Goethe, "W. Meister" (J., II., p. 349).

(3) Compare Mrs. Austin, vol. 3, p. 74 ff., and J., II., 349:  
 "Every one of my writings has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons, a thousand different things—the learned and the ignorant, the wise and the foolish, infancy and age have come in turn, generally without having the least suspicion of it, to bring me the offering of their thoughts, their faculties, their experience; often they have sowed the harvest I have reaped; my work is that of an aggregation of beings taken from the whole of nature; it bears the name of Goethe."

(4) Compare Mrs. Austin, II., 263 f., and J., II., 349:

"The smallest production of nature has the circle of its completeness within itself, and I have only need of eyes to see with in order to discover the relative proportions. I am perfectly sure that within this circle, however narrow, an entirely genuine existence is enclosed. A work of art, on the other hand, has its completeness out of itself; the Best lies in the Idea of the artist which he seldom or never reaches; all the rest lies in certain conventional rules which are indeed derived from the nature of art and of mechanical processes, but still are not so easy to decipher as the laws of living nature. In works of art there is much that is traditional; the works of nature are ever a freshly uttered word of God."

<sup>43</sup>(p. 74). J. B. Thayer, "Western Journey," p. 17.

<sup>44</sup>(p. 74). Compare Journal for Jan. 23, 1834, and letter to Carlyle of Nov. 20, 1834.

<sup>45</sup>(p. 75). Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, I., p. 285.

<sup>46</sup>(p. 77). Letter to Grimm, Jan. 5, 1871.

<sup>47</sup>(p. 78). Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II., p. 98.

<sup>48</sup>(p. 78). C. E. Norton, "Letters" (Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1913).

<sup>49</sup>(p. 79). Essay on "Transcendentalism," Fraser's Mag., 1864, p. 256.

<sup>50</sup>(p. 79). Moncure D. Conway, "Autobiography, Memories, and Experiences," 2 vol. (Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1904), I., p. 147.

<sup>51</sup>(p. 84). In this chapter it is our endeavor to mirror as objectively as possible Emerson's opinion of the German poet. The essays on "Modern Literature" and on "Goethe, the Writer," are fundamental, and most of the quotations are taken directly from them; the sources of all other quotations are given as Journals, Correspondence, etc., in the notes.

<sup>52</sup>(p. 86). This virtue of Goethe's, "a thing for a word," is repeatedly spoken of in the Anglo-American criticism, by Carlyle and most of his successors.

<sup>63</sup>(p. 87). See G. W. Cooke, "Emerson," p. 223, where it is quoted from Emerson's extemporaneous speech at Harvard.

<sup>64</sup>(p. 94). Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, I., 29 f.

<sup>56</sup>(p. 95). Emerson says elsewhere: "Goethe, the surpassing intellect of modern times, apprehends the spiritual, but is not spiritual."

<sup>66</sup>(p. 97). See M. Fuller, "Memoirs," vol. I., p. 242.

<sup>67</sup>(p. 99). Compare (Wks., VIII., p. 331):

"Many of his works hung on the easel, from youth to age, and received a stroke in every month and year. A literary astrologer, he never applied himself to any task but at the happy moment when all the stars consented."

<sup>58</sup>(p. 101). See Holmes, "Emerson," p. 315.

<sup>59</sup>(p. 101). For Goethe on the poet, see: "Faust," I., 134-157 (Wks., 13, p. 8); "Lehrjahre," Bk. II., ch. 2 (Wks., 17, p. 90 f.).

<sup>60</sup>(p. 104). See Holmes, "Emerson," p. 381.

<sup>61</sup>(p. 106). See "Emerson in Concord," p. 65.

<sup>62</sup>(p. 109). Thayer, "Western Journey," p. 17.

<sup>63</sup>(p. 109). C. E. Norton, "Letters," p. 488.

<sup>64</sup>(p. 109). G. W. Cooke, "Emerson," p. 223.

<sup>65</sup>(p. 110). Emerson became acquainted with Margaret Fuller in 1835. Frederick Henry Hedge loaned him her manuscript copy of the translation of "Tasso."

<sup>66</sup>(p. 111). See F. A. Braun, "Margaret Fuller and Goethe," p. 205.

<sup>67</sup>(p. 112). Conway, Autobiography, I., p. 147.

<sup>68</sup>(p. 112). For DeQuincey's opinion, see Works (Edinburgh, Adam & Charles Black, 1870), vol. XI., p. 222-258; and also articles on Goethe and Schiller (Wks., IV., p. 395 and 422).

<sup>69</sup>(p. 112). Goodnight, p. 69.

<sup>70</sup>(p. 113). Woodbury, "Talks with R. W. Emerson," p. 54.

<sup>71</sup>(p. 119). See "Man of Letters" (Wks., X., p. 245): "The great poem of the age is the disagreeable poem of 'Faust,' of which the 'Festus' of Bailey and the 'Paracelsus' of Browning are English variations."

<sup>72</sup>(p. 117). G. W. Cooke, "Emerson," p. 223.

<sup>73</sup>(p. 117). C. E. Norton, "Letters," I., p. 488.

<sup>74</sup>(p. 117). J. B. Thayer, "Western Journey," p. 14 and 15.

#### CHAPTER IV. CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

In general, see: G. E. Woodberry's "Ralph Waldo Emerson," p. 107-157; Schiller's "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen" (1793-94), and Über naive und sentimentalische Dich-



tung" (1795); and on Goethe, see the works as given in the bibliography, especially the article by Paulsen, and the books of Harnack, Boucke, and Siebeck.

<sup>75</sup>(p. 131). See Kant's *Werke*, vol. 6 (1907, Berlin, Georg Reimer), "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft" (1793); also Paulsen's article and K. Vorländer's "Kant, Schiller, Goethe (Leipzig, 1907)", p. 153 ff. Kant's article appeared in part in the *Berliner Monatschrift* in 1792, "On the Radical Evil in Human Nature."

<sup>76</sup>(p. 133). Compare Tolstoi, "Religion and Morality," 1894, where a similar distinction is drawn: "The Christian Ethics not only demands the sacrifice of the personality for the aggregate of personalities, but also the renunciation of one's own personality and of the aggregate of personalities for the purpose of serving God; but the pagan philosophy investigates only the means for attaining the greatest good of the personality or of the aggregate of personalities."

<sup>77</sup>(p. 133). Compare Emerson (*Wks.*, VI., p. 239): "Higher than the question of our duration is the question of our deserving. Immortality will come to such as are fit for it, and he who would be a great soul in the future must be a great soul now."

Compare, also, F. B. Sanborn, "The Personality of Emerson" (p. 122), where Emerson is quoted: "I think well of Goethe's saying—that if Nature has given us these faculties, and I have employed mine well and faithfully to the end, she is bound still further to explain the questions which they put."

<sup>78</sup>(p. 134). See Eckermann, "Gespräche mit Goethe" (Jan. 18, 1827).

<sup>79</sup>(p. 136). See Eckermann (April 7, 1829), "Napoleon war darin besonders gross, dass er zu jeder Stunde derselbige war. Vor einer Schlacht, während einer Schlacht, nach einem Siege, nach einer Niederlage, er stand immer auf festen Füssen und war immer klar und entschieden, was zu thun sei." Again, Eckermann records for Feb. 17, 1832: "Es ist im Grunde auch alles Thorheit, ob einer etwas aus sich habe, oder ob er es von andern habe; ob einer durch sich wirke, oder ob er durch andere wirke; die Hauptsache ist, dass man ein grosses Wollen habe und Geschick und Beharrlichkeit besitze, es auszuführen; alles übrige ist gleichgültig."

<sup>80</sup>(p. 141) See Eckermann (April 27, 1825); also *Werke*, I., p. 242, in regard to the French Revolution: "Franzosen drängt in diesen verworrenen Tagen, wie ehemals Luthertum es getan, ruhige Bildung zurück."



<sup>81</sup>(p. 146). James Freeman Clarke, in his "Nineteenth Century Questions," makes a like statement in regard to Goethe and Schiller: "We admire Goethe; we love Schiller."

<sup>82</sup>(p. 147). Schiller's idealism is clearly and nobly expressed in the poem, "Das Ideal und das Leben":

"Aber flüchtet aus der Sinne Schranken  
In die Freiheit der Gedanken,  
Und die Furchterscheinung ist entflohn,  
Und der ew'ge Abgrund wird sich füllen;  
Nehmt die Gottheit auf in euren Willen,  
Und sie steigt von ihrem Weltenthron.  
Des Gesetzes strenge Fessel bindet  
Nur den Sklavensinn, der es verschmäh't;  
Mit des Menschen Widerstand verschwindet  
Auch des Gottes Majestät."

In his essay on "Anmut und Würde," Schiller expresses his belief in the freedom-of-the-will and the divinity of the moral will of man. "Auf die Begierde und Verabscheuung erfolgt bei dem Tiere ebenso notwendig Handlung, als Begierde auf Empfindung und Empfindung auf den äüßern Eindruck erfolgte. Es ist hier eine stetig fortlaufende Kette, wo jeder Ring notwendig in den andern greift. Bei dem Menschen ist noch eine Instanz mehr, nämlich der Wille, der als ein übersinnliches Vermögen weder dem Gesetz der Natur so unterworfen ist, dasz ihm nicht vollkommen freie Wahl bliebe, sich entweder nach diesen oder nach jenem zu richten. Das Tier musz streben, den Schmerz los zu sein; der Mensch kann sich entschlieszen, ihn zu behalten.

"Der Wille des Menschen ist ein erhabener Begriff, auch dann, wenn man auf seinen moralischen Gebrauch nicht achtet. Schon der blosze Wille erhebt den Menschen über die Tierheit; der moralische erhebt ihn zur Gottheit. Er musz aber jene zuvor verlassen haben, eh' er sich dieser nähern kann; daher ist es kein geringer Schritt zur moralischen Freiheit des Willens, durch Brechung der Naturnotwendigkeit in sich, auch in gleichgültigen Dingen, den bloszen Willen zu üben."

<sup>83</sup>(p. 147). Compare "Brand" (Ibsen's Wks., Scribner, 1907, p. 11):

"But help is idle for the man  
Who nothing wills but what he can.  
Ah, life! ah, life! Why art thou then  
So passing sweet to mortal men?  
In every weakling's estimation

His own life does as grossly weigh  
 As if the load of man's salvation  
 Upon his puny shoulders lay.  
 For every burden he's prepared;  
 God help us—so his life be spared."

<sup>84</sup>(p. 151). Goethe said of the friendship: "Mein Verhältniss zu Schiller gründete sich auf die entschiedene Richtung beider auf einen Zweck, unsere gemeinsame Thätigkeit auf die Verschiedenheit der Mittel, wodurch wir jenen zu erreichen strebten. . . . Es ist ein grosser Unterschied, ob der Dichter zum Allgemeinen das Besondere sucht, oder im Besondern das Allgemeine schaut." (Wke., 38, p. 261.) And Eckermann (Okt. 7, 1827): "Ein Glück für mich war es indes, dass ich Schillern hatte. Denn so verschieden unsere beiderseitigen Naturen auch waren, so gingen unsere Richtungen auf Eins; welches denn unser Verhältniss so innig machte dass im Grunde keiner ohne den andern leben konnte."

Of the general influence of Schiller's philosophical essays Goethe says (Wke., 39, p. 32): "Wie wunderlich es auch damit gewesen sei, trat erst hervor, als mein Verhältniss zu Schillern sich belebte. Unsere Gespräche waren durchaus produktiv oder theoretisch, gewöhnlich beides zugleich; er predigte das Evangelium der Freiheit, ich wollte die Rechte der Natur nicht verkürzt wissen. Aus freundschaftlicher Neigung gegen mich vielleicht mehr als aus eigner Überzeugung, behandelte er in den ästhetischen Briefen die gute Mutter nicht mit jenen harten Ausdrücken, die mir den Aufsatz über Anmut und Würde so verhaszt gemacht hatten. Weil ich aber, von meiner Seite hartnäckig und eigensinnig, die Vorzüge der griechischen Dichtungsart, der darauf gegründeten und von dort herkömmlichen Poesie nicht allein hervorhob, sondern ausschliesslich diese Weise für die einzig rechte und wünschenswerte gelten liess, so ward er zu schärferen Nachdenken genötigt, und eben diesem Konflikt verdanken wir die Aufsätze über naive und sentimentalische Poesie. Beide Dichtungsweisen sollten sich bequemen, einander gegenüberstehend sich wechselseitig gleichen Rang zu vergönnen.

"Er legte hierdurch den ersten Grund zur ganzen neuen Ästhetik; denn hellenisch und romantisch, und was noch für Synonymen mochten aufgefunden werden, lassen sich alle dorthin zurückführen, wo vom Übergewicht reeller oder ideeller Behandlung zuerst die Rede war."

<sup>85</sup>(p. 152). Compare Emerson's poem, "The Celestial Love" (Wks., IX., p. 115):

"There Past, Present, Future, shoot  
Triple blossoms from one root;  
Substances at base divided,  
In their summits are united;  
There the holy essence rolls,  
One through separated souls;  
And the sunny Aeon sleeps  
Folding Nature in its deeps,  
And every fair and every good,  
Known in part, or known impure,  
To men below,  
In their archetypes endure.  
The race of gods,  
Or those we erring own,  
Are shadows flitting up and down  
In the still abodes.  
The circles of that sea are laws  
Which publish and which hide the cause."

The Goethean conception is poetically given in "Faust" (l. 6285 f.). The realm of the Mütter, where are kept the schemes or typical forms of things, is vague and indefinite. "Ins Unbetretene, Nicht zu Betretende; ein Weg ans Unerbetene, Nicht zu Erbittende.... Von Einsamkeiten wirst umhergetrieben." These eternal ideas or types come to possess individual character in the phenomena of nature and life. \*

"Bei seinem Schein wirst du die Mütter sehn,  
Die einen sitzen, andre stehn und gehn,  
Wie's eben kommt. Gestaltung, Umgestaltung,  
Des ewigen Sinnes ewige Unterhaltung,  
Umschwebt von Bildern aller Kreatur;  
Sie sehn dich nicht, denn Schemen sehn sie nur."

<sup>86</sup>(p. 152). See Eckermann, 1825, Oktober 15.

<sup>87</sup>(p. 159). See "Fragmente über die Natur" (Wke., 39, p. 5) for a statement of which Goethe, though not directly its author, heartily approved: "Ihre (Natur) Krone ist die Liebe. Nur durch sie kommt man ihr nahe. Sie macht Klüfte zwischen allen Wesen, und alles will sich verschlingen. Sie hat alles isoliert um alles zusammenzuziehen. Durch ein paar Züge aus dem Becher der Liebe hält sie für ein Leben voll Mühe schadlos."

<sup>88</sup>(p. 163). See Eckermann, 1827, April 1.

<sup>89</sup>(p. 165). Compare Goethe: "Die Kunst ruht auf einer Art religiösem Sinn, auf einem tiefen unerschütterlichen Ernst; deswegen sie sich auch so gern mit der Religion vereinigt. Die Religion bedarf keines Kunstsinnens, sie ruht auf ihrem eigenen Ernst; sie verleiht aber auch keinen, so wenig sie Geschmack gibt."

<sup>90</sup>(p. 173). Compare Emerson, "Essays," 2nd Series, No. 7, "Politics" (Wks., III., p. 199 f.); and Schiller, "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen," 9ter Brief.

## CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION.

<sup>91</sup>(p. 181). See Hermann Grimm, "Life and Times of Goethe." (Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1880.) To the translator.

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